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TWO CAVES.

BY HARVEY HOWARD.

There is a valley in the realm of Inde
Which English dwellers call the "Vale of Wind;"
The French, romantic, call it "Cave of Song."
While with the natives 'tis the "Demonic Gorge."

'Tis said that fearless travelers sometimes brave
The unknown monsters that infest the cave,
And enter in the narrow, rugged way,
O'erhung by rusty rocks so massive, gray,
And resolutely cold, that all beholders feel
A shuddering pain, as though the keen-edged
steel
Were at their throats; and that when those who
wait
With breath suspended, prophesying fate
Swift and most doleful, growing weary, call
And ask if all is well, adown the wall
Their cries are echoed, like the mocking taunt
Of crazed demons who that valley haunt.

One time a youthful son of a race
Of mighty kingmen came unto that place,
And hearing tale of demon presence there,
Where else was sweet and beautiful and fair,
He sought the cave, "to hear," he jesting said,
"The voices he must listen to when dead."
They told him that the moaning of the sea,
Further to eastward than the eye could see,
Sometimes was audible to keen-eared men
Who stood before the cavern door, and then
The demon's voice was wild and sharp and clear,
And could be heard within the city near;
But that when no air stirred, the weak-voiced
wave
Gave forth no sound, and then from out the cave
A gentle plaint was only audible.

The young prince gayly laughed to hear men tell
Mysterious stories which themselves made plain,
Unknowing, while they told. His laugh again
Came outward from the cave, hollow and sad,
Like him, who, joyously dissembling, yet is mad.

Before the cave a wild rose fragrance gave
Making more gloomy the uncovered grave
With all its sense of desolate distress.
The prince plucked off one tiny bud to bless
His after-journey with its fragrance sweet,
And came his way, to have men tell his feat
As wondrous venture.

But there is a cave
Within the reach of life's great ocean wave,
More dire and doleful. From it all the song
That comes is song of siren; and as long
As man's existence has its cavern been
Would you its name? 'Tis the Cave of Sin.
Men pass the wild-rose romance at the door
And enter in the blackened walls, no more
To come without. In vain their madened yell
And cries for help. Their feet take hold on hell.
And him I count a kingman who descends
The shapes of death beyond the scented prize,
And, taking it, reveals in all its dread
The crying valley of the ruined dead!

Vials of Wrath:

THE GRAVE BETWEEN THEM.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL.

AUTHOR OF "TWO GIRLS' LIVES," "LOVE-
BLIND," "OATH-BOUND," "BARBARA'S
FATE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER V. LUCIFER.

FRANK HAVELSTOCK had received Mr. Lexington's telegram in a few minutes after the messenger had left Tanglewood with it. His valise had been ready packed, as he confidently expected such a summons from his cousin; while the cart-load of trunks in the baggage-room of the hotel were in perfect readiness to be forwarded without delay.

A smile illuminated his face as he read it, carelessly, after handing the hall-boy a quarter for his services.

"And so I am wanted at Tanglewood? for what, I wonder! to congratulate the noble pair on the final bridging of the chasm that has yawned between them so many years? or to still occupy my position of nearest friend and confidant of my cousin?"

He rolled the dispatch into a taper, stuck it into the gas jet that burned constantly for such a purpose, and lit his cigar.

He called a carriage, and gave the order—to the 28th street pier, that he reached in time for the boat.

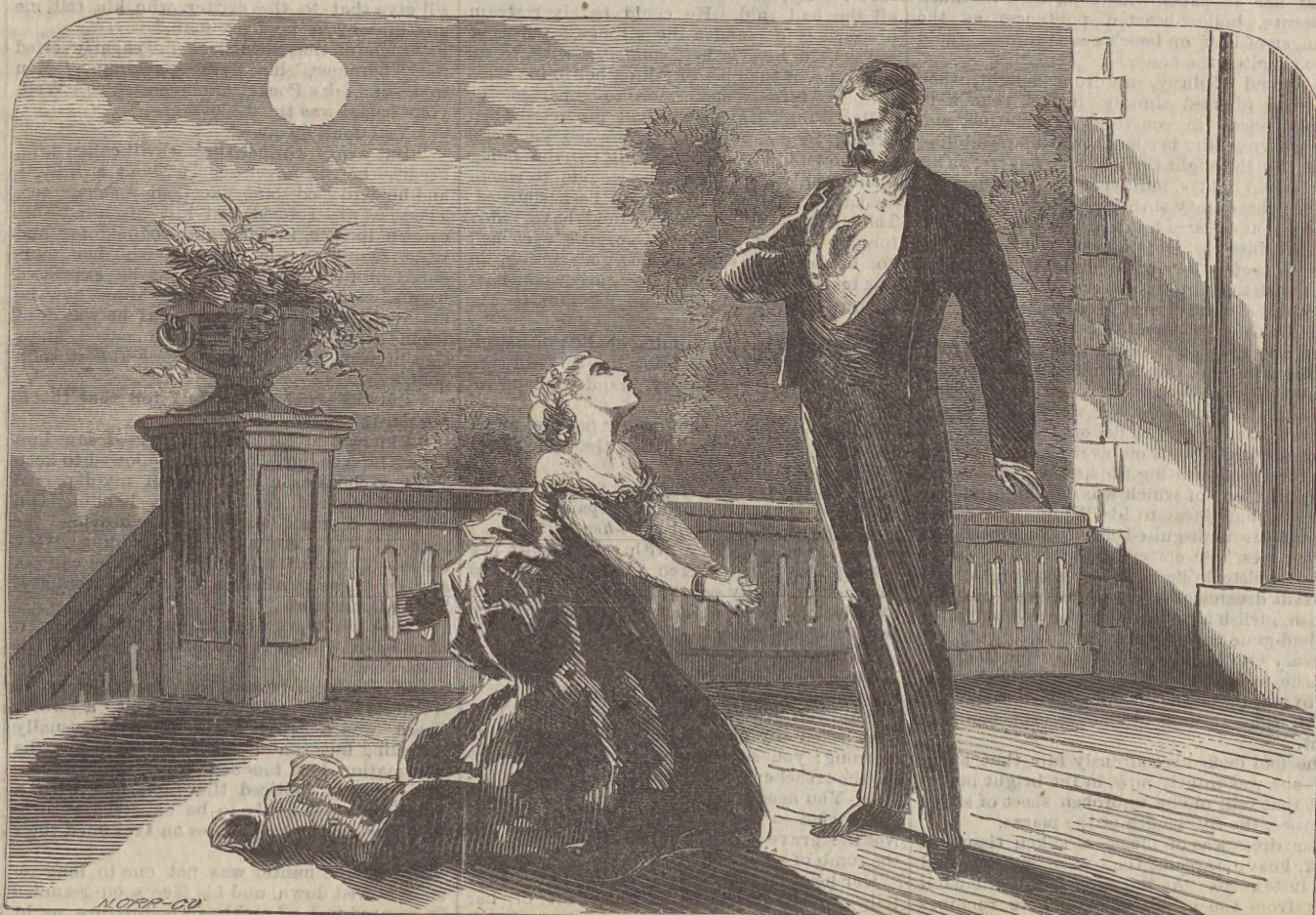
It was a pleasant trip up the Hudson to Tanglewood, and in the couple of hours or longer that Havelstock sat in his camp chair on the after deck, with his handsome feet crossed on the railing of the guard, and his Panama hat jammed over his forehead, he had ample time to arrange his intentions and marshal them in fighting array. His impression was correct—that Georgia and Mr. Lexington were still unrequited, and being as he had been, so long on confidential terms with his cousin, consequently knowing his state of mind regarding his wife, Havelstock was aware of the fault in the case being Georgia's.

Such being the state of affairs—and he guessed it exactly—he was perfectly satisfied, for such a condition at Tanglewood was the very one he most wanted. It was his grand object in life to keep Theo and Georgia apart, by any means in his power, now that they had created a gulf between themselves.

He knew his chances of succession to the wealth and position he coveted depended entirely on the fact of Lexington's dying childless; and while there was a flaw in the nature either of Mr. Lexington or his wife, on which he could work, by which inflame one against the other, the while maintaining his innocence in the matter by pretending friendship to them both, Frank Havelstock made up his mind to devote all his energies to his treacherous task—for Tanglewood at the end.

If the two had become reconciled—then, his chances had collapsed suddenly; but he would not believe so.

He sprang from the boat to the rustic landing, built for the private use of Tanglewood and its guests, with a speed that betrayed to



"See how I, your injured wife, humble myself before you, craving the love I never should ask for!"

himself his eagerness for the scene of action. He only slackened his pace, and appeared, as he generally did, the elegant gentleman of leisure, when he was fairly in range of the facade of windows, with their gay awnings outside and floating lace curtains within.

It was second nature to him. This constantly acting as if some one's eyes were on him—that is, when there was the slightest probability of such being the case. Of course there were times when Frank Havelstock would have liked no eyes on his conduct—but now, conscious of his good appearance, his polished ease, his undoubted position in the house whither he was going, he sauntered toward the grand entrance, without so much as a glance toward one of the dozen windows, yet feeling that, in nine chances out of ten, there were bright eyes watching him come.

Not Georgia's—he knew her too well for that; but he took it for granted there were guests at Tanglewood, young lady guests, who had, perhaps, been apprised of his coming.

He went on, therefore, rung the bell, gave his card to the hall porter, and for the first time in several years crossed the threshold at Tanglewood, on which he had such a cautious eye, for whose inmates he entertained such sinister designs.

It was a stroke of his peculiar policy to inquire for Georgia, and the footman brought back her answer.

"Mrs. Lexington would see him in a few moments."

Possibly five minutes passed before he heard the rustle of her skirts on the stairs as she descended, and swept over the mosaic inlaid flooring of the large, imposing hall, out of which all the grand saloons on the lower floor opened.

He arose to greet her with an undemonstrative, candid warmth that was best suited to disarm Georgia of the prejudices he knew existed.

"My dear Mrs. Lexington—the first familiar face I have seen since my return to America. I need not ask how the years have dealt with you—you are well and happy. Thank God for that!"

He had taken her hand and pressed it a moment warmly. His voice was frank, ardent; his language unexceptionable; but when he had caught a glimpse of her radiant face, that he had never seen but in gloomy shadows for so long a time, his heart misgave him, and while he inwardly cursed the probability that her happiness arose from the fact of her friendship with her husband, his false lips framed the thankfulness they made almost profane by uttering.

But, it somewhat disarmed Georgia; she smiled—a little sadly, as she answered:

"You are very kind, Frank; and I will confess I am surprised to hear such good wishes from you. Yes, I am well, and—am pleased to see you."

She hesitated; her natural candor forbidding her to utter the fashionable falsehood of welcome. She glanced into Havelstock's face, and saw his well-simulated expression of considerate anxiety. His bold eyes looked more honest, more frank than she ever had seen them, and there was a little womanly pity in her heart for the man who had no living relative save her husband to welcome him from a perilous journey. He had been a faithful follower of her husband's, too, amid all sorts of danger and privations, and had been a companion in loneliness, if not a friend—her heart was already softening and widening under the influence of the love she was going to offer her husband on the morrow—and so, excusing any

misgivings she experienced on the grounds that she had no real, tangible reasons to distrust Frank Havelstock, and smothering those fine instincts that warn every sensitive nature of coming dooms, Georgia, with her own hands, helped to forge the very first link in the chain of events that was to bind in most pitious serfdom.

He met her critical, intense gaze with quiet, grave patience.

"Mrs. Lexington, I believe you mean what you say, when, after a second's consideration, you tell me you are glad to see me. I thank you for it; I will endeavor to be worthy of your friendly welcome."

"I think I mean it, Frank," she returned, slowly. "To be more candid still, I was sorry I learned you were coming, because—because—with such trouble between my husband and I—and fearing you were not a friend of mine, I—"

She paused, in shy silence.

Havelstock's heart gave a wild thrill of delight at her candid words; then, after all, they were yet unreconciled; he was in time! and, more fatefully wonderful still, he was winning Georgia Lexington to his side!

What more could man ask? But with all this wild elation of thought, not a vestige of his triumph was visible on his face, or in his black eyes.

"You do not mean to tell me I must retract my congratulations on your reconciliation to your husband? Mrs. Lexington, surely you will not pain me with such unwelcome news! You looked so bright, so radiant, when you entered the room, and I knew my cousin came from Africa for no other purpose."

He bent a grave, questioning face to hers.

Her eyes met his a moment, eyes in which all the ardor of her passion shone, then they veiled themselves under the fringing-lashed lids.

"It is my fault, Frank—all my fault. I was so proud and relentless and hardened by his absence. But—I am sorry now!"

It was exquisite—the girlish confession, uttered with a shy, proud fondness that made Havelstock wonder if mortal man could resist such persistence. Certainly not Theo Lexington, and he resolved to be doubly on the alert.

"You will forgive me if I speak very plainly, Mrs. Lexington, and tell you, if you have repulsed your husband's overtures, you have done a cruel deed. If you had heard all he said to me, seen his impatience to get home, known his positive certainty that you would receive him as his heart craved, then you could appreciate the force of your act."

Georgia's face was averted, but he saw the quiver of her scarlet lips.

"You are his friend, Frank—do you think he will overlook my harshness, and—and—take me back?"

Her voice fell to a delicious murmur; Havelstock could hardly believe this was the haughty, imperious woman he had known for years.

"Certainly he will—assuredly he will—if you are prepared to go humbly and acknowledge your fault. Lexington is as proud as you are."

"I know it, and I am afraid he is angry, and will refuse me."

She lifted her pleading face, so fair, so eloquent, and Havelstock swore an oath that it should not stand between him and Tanglewood—if he could annul its pure influence.

He looked just a trifle grieved and troubled, and drew his hand thoughtfully across his forehead.

"It is just possible that Lexington—barely

possible—that he will resent your reception of him. Suppose I see him, and use my influence in your behalf? In either issue of the event, I will not be responsible, however, for in one case, your love will conquer, in the other, his own pride triumph."

It sounded very manly, very sensible, and Georgia wondered why she had ever suffered herself to think so ill of this man, why she had wronged him so deeply.

She stole a look at his face while he was speaking, and marveled that she never before had discovered such an expression of calm steadfastness and honesty on his countenance.

Her conscience accused her of her biased judgment, her severe decision against him—this loyal friend of her husband's, who had followed him through part of a dangerous journey simply and solely because of the ties that bound them. She had heard of strong friendships between men, but this was simply poetical in its disinterested faithfulness.

She reproved herself that, in all those early years when she so needed a friend, and Frank Havelstock had been available, she had treated him so coldly that his self-respect had forbidden him to intrude upon her oftener than cold courtesy demanded.

She remembered now that, like a true gentleman, he had never resented her conduct, but endured it patiently, as an unjustly accused man, strong in his own truth, would do.

She regarded him as an enemy, without the least evidence of his treachery, except the instincts of her own heart—her poor, torn, tempest-tossed heart.

But now, she saw such bliss ahead, that in its contemplation she could have forgiven her greatest enemy, much less this man whom she had misjudged, whom she now had the chance of appreciating as he deserved.

He broke the thread of her reverie, that he had followed by the mirrored expressions on her face.

"If you will send me up to Lexington's rooms, now?"

She rung for a servant, to escort him, and retired to her own apartments.

While Havelstock followed his lead, with a perfectly Satanic expression on his features, that would have petrified Georgia with horror had she seen it.

CHAPTER VI.

LUCIFER'S WORK.

HAVELSTOCK went through the immense lower hall, that was one of Tanglewood's greatest attractions, that strangers from abroad had frequently come to see, and gone away impressed with the idea of the perfection of architectural beauty and grandeur.

It was immensely wide, with superbly inlaid flooring, and extended through the entire depth of the house, from which at one end was the grand entrance, with its walnut and plate-glass doors, with solid silver handles and sills, that shut off the large, square vestibule, with its elaborate hat-racks, and high-back, crimson-damask cushioned, gothic chairs, where the hall-porter passed his time, between admitting guests and admiring his livery. Beyond this again, were the massive outer doors, that opened directly upon the marble floor of the many-pillared piazza, that extended across the entire front of the house, and on which were spread, at intervals, thick Persian druggets, rustic chairs, and camp-stools.

Within the hall, on either side, were doors opening into the spacious apartments. On the right, the state drawing-room occupied the entire length—a gorgeous saloon, whose adorning had cost enough to keep a modest family a life-

time. It was seldom used, there being so many other accommodations for guests.

Opposite the drawing-room was the smallest room in the house—a tiny reception-room, with one window, furnished in quiet elegance of style, in a rich wood-brown, with lighter brown satin drapery. Here all visitors waited, while the hall-porter sent their cards, or message.

Connecting with the reception-room were the double parlors, one upholstered in light-blue satin, with drab puffs, the other in scarlet, relieved by black. A carpet of white ground, with a brilliant Persian pattern, covered both floors so velvety and high-piled that the foot sunk into it as if it had been yielding moss.

A high archway divided the rooms, from which depended heavy lace curtains, and a row of slender Corinthian columns, of tinted marble, extended the entire length on either side. Three mirrors at each end, with bay-windows on both sides at the rear, that made delightful little retreats when the lace curtains were let down. At the back end of the hall, a large oriel window extended to the roof, in the center of which was a door to pass through. At one side, opposite the stairs, was the elevator, to the dining-rooms, or above.

The stairs were wide, easy of ascent, with gilded balusters, at the foot of which a large statue held the gas-jets—a statue that matched in size and beauty the others that were ranged in niches between the doors.

Havelstock went through and past all these appliances of luxurious wealth, and up the velvet-covered stairs, with a wild thrill of excitement as he thought it was decidedly within the range of probability that it would all be his one day, if he kept his own counsel and wrought his own plans.

He liked it—his taste was aesthetic in many respects, and it gave him keen delight to be surrounded by just such things; and as he tapped at his cousin's door he recorded his oath to leave no stone unturned, to stem undaunted every adverse storm and tide, to stop at nothing that would help him secure his ends.

Lexington's servant opened the door—a faithful, devoted man, with a head of white hairs, a man who had followed his master's fortune during all those years of exile.

"Good afternoon, Robbins. This is better than camping out, after all, ain't it? Lexington, I'm here to report."

Mr. Lexington gave him his hand with a cordiality that denoted the warmth of his affection.

"Welcome to Tanglewood, although I did not hope to be so agreeably surprised to-day. Robbins, just attend to Mr. Havelstock's valise, and see if his room is in readiness. You may tell Mrs. Lex—"

Frank interrupted him.

"He need not take that trouble. I have paid my respects to your wife already."

Robbins went out, and Frank seated himself in a large swinging chair that Lexington indicated.

"You see I am making myself perfectly at home, Frank."

His voice was bitter, and Havelstock was not slow to perceive the weary, disappointed expression on his face.

"It is good always to make the best of everything. You are certainly very comfortable."

He glanced around the room in which they sat, the front room of the suite, that opened upon a second story balcony at both sides. The windows were partly open, and the sweet, fresh breath of the summer afternoon was gently swaying the faded lawn curtains.

It was a delightful "den" for a luxurious gentleman, like Lexington or Havelstock, with its lounging chairs, its sofa, its elegant desk, and tables for chess, cards, or possibly a *l'ete-l'ete* lunch. A dark, bright carpet covered the floor, a chandelier swung from the ceiling, and a cigar-case, a small dressing-case, and a match-safe ornamented the marble mantelpiece.

Looking over his shoulder, Havelstock saw the central room of the suite was the bath and dressing-room, and beyond he saw the dainty appointments of the bed-room, with its walnut suit, mounted with gilt, its snow-white toilet appurtenances, its foamy lace curtains.

"Very comfortable, but, somehow, I don't see any signs of a woman's presence."

Havelstock looked inquiringly at Lexington, over whose face darkened the shadow already on it.

"These are my rooms; Georgia's are opposite. We are not reconciled, Frank."

There was woe enough in his simple lament to have touched any heart less callous than Havelstock's; his fairly leaped with joy.

"Not reconciled, after all! Lexington, from my soul I pity you."

He gave him his hand, that the husband grasped and pressed tightly, as if there was sympathy in the touch.

"You know how I felt, Frank, as well as I do. How I came thousands of miles for but one purpose—to beg her forgiveness and commence my life again. I implored her by every tie we had known to forgive, forget and come to me; but—but she rejected me in scorn, in coldness, in contempt."

His tones were mournful, and he dropped Havelstock's hand and pressed his own over his eyes.

"It has unmanned me, I must admit, Frank. It was such a shock, and— isn't she perfectly glorious? I never loved her so madly in all my life as in that one moment when I pleaded with all my heart. Love her? I love her as no lover ever worshipped before. I

love her with a passion that shames my boyish affection into silence.

Havelstock's face wore an expression of deepest concern.

"I wonder where the trouble lies? Lexington, if Georgia should come to you, and ask you to forgive her, and beg for your love and favor, what would you do?"

It was his feeler, this question that would further decide his plans. He put it cautiously, with the air of a man who yearned to do his friend the favor suggested.

A perfect glory leaped to Lexington's eyes. "Can you ask me what I would do? Why, I would let her say all she would, because it would fairly intoxicate my senses to listen; and then I would take her in my arms and seal my pardon with kisses, and no one should ever come between us again."

His voice fairly trembled with eagerness. Havelstock felt a possibility, for the instant, of defeat, but he kept his ground well.

"You are the most generous man I ever knew. You love well, Lexington."

"Generous? You call an act of justice generous? You think you measure my love by an act like that? If you do, Frank, you haven't the remotest idea of how I worship my beautiful wife. Do you know, if I thought there was one chance in a thousand I'd cross that corridor to her room and go down on my knees to her and beseech her to love me?"

Lexington's splendid face was all aglow, and Havelstock had difficult work to effectually sustain his wrath, his fear.

"I admire such devotion; the woman is fortunate, indeed, who can inspire such. But, Lexington, I am sorry to feel it my duty to remind you of it; but you can hardly expect that, after years of silence, after the terrible way you wronged her regarding her first marriage, after the curt way you announced your arrival, you could hardly expect a woman of Georgia's spirit to act other than she did. She is proud enough to resent what she regards an insult; and, Lexington, for the honor of the family name, for the sake of your peace of mind, don't allow her pride to exceed yours. Resent her insult to you, humble her if ever she gives you a chance, and, my word for it, when once she finds you are not the humble suppliant at her feet, she will yield readily. Is it possible you have made woman a study and do not know this?"

Lexington smiled faintly. "I have not made woman my study, Frank, except Georgia. I have thought, at times, perhaps it would be the true way to win her, but—"

"It is the only way. I have studied woman closely, and I venture to wager the successful end of this war between you will depend upon your generalship."

"If I thought it—if I knew it," Lexington said, slowly.

"Granted you don't know, will you tell me what you hope to gain by going on in this way? I desire greatly to see you and your wife on the right terms. I will use all my influence on both of you to bring about the desirable consummation, for your sake particularly."

He was so in earnest, so kindly interested and Lexington trusted him implicitly.

"I feel that I need advice," he went on, just a little sadly, "and you are the one to give it. I want you to answer me one question—one question, Frank, as truly as you know how, regardless of the pain the answer may give me. Will you?"

Havelstock started in half suspicious alarm. What could Lexington mean?

"You may depend upon a truthful answer from me," he said, quietly.

"It is this—only this. Honestly, Frank, do you think Georgia cares for me—or—or—is her heart buried with her former husband, Carleton Vincyl, the father of her little dead baby?"

Havelstock drew a long breath of positive relief; then, with a perfectly simulated shadow of pain on his face, averted it slightly, then, arose from his chair, and crossed the room, to the window, where he remained standing silently, with his back to his cousin.

The effect was produced precisely as Havelstock had hoped. His silence, his trying to hide his true feelings, made an impression of vague anguish on Lexington.

"Speak out, Frank; I know what you want to keep me from hearing—say it; I can stand it."

Then Havelstock turned sadly around.

"I would have given a thousand dollars had you left that question unasked. I promised my answer, and I am a man of truth, what ever pain the truth costs me. Lexington, I know Georgia has ceased to care for you. I had it from her lips not an hour ago. Do you wonder now at my advice? Oh, I dare not speak further. I can not, and Mrs. Lexington my hostess. Let me off, Lexington, I beg."

He seemed terribly agitated, but Lexington caught his arm, imperiously.

"What is it, probe deep, Frank; I will live to thank you yet."

His eyes fairly commanded the answer. His face was ashen, and there was a shadow of a great woe on his splendid mouth.

"She is coming to you, soon, to make false protestations of penitence and affection. I could hardly understand her, in my horror of her duplicity, but she hopes to gain some end she has in view. I think she intends to work on your one weak point, your passion for her—and then, to have her revenge at length. It sickens me, Lexington, I will not speak further."

He looked so pitifully, resolutely at the man whom he had so smitten.

Lexington bowed his grand head, and staggered heavily to the nearest chair, while Havelstock's eyes gloated evilly on him.

He raised his face, presently, handsome, haggard, proud and stony, as if hewn from marble.

"I thank you for placing me where I can defend myself. I am proud, Frank, and I shall not forget who reminded me of it. Let her come, I will meet her as she deserves. Will you go to your room now, and dress? There are some young people here who would be happy to have you join them at croquet, at five o'clock. I want to be alone, Frank, to accustom myself to regard Georgia as the false, designing creature I had learned her to be, from your lips, that I can trust, if no one else."

And Havelstock went to his room, content with his first move.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SCORNED SACRIFICE.

THAT day at dinner, Havelstock was introduced to the guests at Tanglewood, by Mr. Lexington, making, as he fully intended to make, a favorable impression on every one of them, and being himself particularly pleased with Ida Wynne, whose arch, merry eyes met his at the first glance, with a word of wonderment in their depths.

He was tenfold handsomer than his picture; and she noticed at the very first look she gave

him, how perfectly he was dressed, how courteous and unobtrusive his elegant manner was; and, with a half shy glance at Georgia, thought the chances had increased, that, possibly, this was her fate.

Not that she was unwomanly, or reckless in her unbounded admiration of the man whose Spanish eyes had haunted her in his picture, ever since she and the other girls had seen it in the album; only, she was an impressive, ardent, heart-whole girl, and Frank Havelstock, with her prejudices in his favor, beforehand, was a shrewd, gallant, lady's man, who had learned to perfection, his art of captivating hearts.

They were a merry party that played croquet, or danced in the parlor, or promenade in the park, that sweet summer night. Mr. Lexington was in a new mood, since his interview with Frank, and he had come down to dinner, firmly decided as to the course he intended to pursue. And that was, not to let Georgia imagine, for a moment longer, that the refusal of her love had power to make him miserable. So he laughed and talked, now with one, now with another; he played chess with Mrs. Hammond for his partner, turned the pages while Miss Reynolds played an opera, and then, when Ida Wynne declared Mr. Havelstock should give them the music for a redowa, he went over to Georgia, who was quietly chatting with Mr. Hammond, and asked her to dance with him, with as much elaborate, hollow-hearted politeness as the stranger of half an hour's acquaintance would have solicited the honor.

A second of dizzy, rapturous delight, when her eyes glanced timidly in his, that were simply raised in courteous expectation, and Georgia gave him her hand, warm, trembling. He felt the slight thrill in her fingers, as his hand closed lightly, indifferently, over them; he noticed the dainty shrinking, for a second, of her form as his arm touched her waist, and he thought, bitterly, what a deep woman she was, thus to preface her later dramatic performances with these little touches that she intended, doubtless, should strengthen her position.

While Georgia, trembling with ecstasy, excused him for not pressing her hand, or resting his arm more familiarly around her waist, because she had been so cruel, so cruel to him. It was right that she should sue to him, as she had promised herself to do, on the morrow.

So the night went on, every hour of which was further separating the husband and wife; every moment of which was bringing pinkish flushes of happiness to Ida Wynne's cheeks as she met the undisguised admiration in Havelstock's eyes. At eleven, the little party broke, and Havelstock bade Ida "good-night, and pleasant dreams of—!" in such a way that her foolish, girlish heart bounded for an hour after she had gone to her room.

Every one had gone up-stairs but Georgia, and she, in the rush of her thoughts, was walking to and fro on the gleaming marble balcony, feeling that sleep would never visit her that night.

She had looked wondrously fair that evening—she was saintly now, in the bright moonlight that fell, in one unbroken sheet of silver radiance, the full length of the piazza.

Her dress was of black—a silken tissue, of thick, heavy threads, that were lustrous and rich in texture. At the wide sleeves that fell back from the beautiful arm, were ruchings of snow-white blonde; at the neck, that was cut a trifle low in front, another filmy quilling, beneath which was a heavy golden chain of long, massive links, from which depended a large cross of diamonds—that matched the small crosses in her ears. Narrow gold bracelets clasped her arms; a wide, gold-colored sash was artistically draped from her waist; and in her splendid hair nestled a tiny blue lace bow, pinned fast to the lustrous braids by a round, button-like hair-pin of gold.

She had looked well, and she had wondered, more than once, if Theo had thought so. Now, he had gone to his room, and she—she was waiting for the morrow with an impatient eagerness that lent a strange, love-lit glory to her blue eyes.

She walked slowly to the furthest end of the long piazza, her hands clasped before her, her head drooped on her breast. She passed the barred windows of the silent, darkened parlors, and then, just as she came abreast the open door, Mr. Lexington stepped out. He retreated a step in surprise, then laughed.

"I had no idea I should see any one. It is so warm, and I am not used to such early hours."

How grand he was! How sweet a charm he lent the simplest words he uttered! Georgia stood where she was, listening to his voice, almost hungrily.

"We have become accustomed to so little dissipation at Tanglewood that eleven seems late. But I was indisposed to sleep to-night."

She looked at him, shyly, as she said it.

"I hope you are not ill, Mrs. Lexington."

He said it with an elaborate courtesy that would have chilled her had her own heart been less ardent.

"I am not ill, Mr. Lexington; I am only—only—"

She had almost made her confession, then paused, with a sudden shiver of doubting fear. Should she dare shed what she shouldn't tell him, now—here—in the soft moonlight—in the silence of the summer night, whose influences might be so favorable?

A wild thrill of her passionate, yearning heart, catching of her breath, and then—then—she cast the die that settled her fate!

"Theo!"

She uttered his name for the first time since his return; her voice was tremulously sweet, with a shy timidity in its low tones, blended with tenderest entreaty. Her fair face was turned to his own, and he saw a lovely, yet proud, imperiousness on his favorite features.

A gust of sharp pain crossed his own face, so white and impassive in the moonlight; a heart-pang accompanied it, as he thought how fair and yet how false she was. The soft tones of her voice lingered almost pitifully on his ears; the only answer he gave was a slight inclination of his head, then a straight, steady look at her marvelously lovely face, with the thought how true a friend Frank Havelstock was always proving himself to be!

Georgia crossed the short distance that separated them, and laid her hand on his—her warm, vitalizing touch thrilling him from head to foot.

A sudden luminous light of passionate love beamed on her face so plainly that it heralded her words. "He saw it, and above the stern, sharp discipline of himself, there leaped into his eyes such a heart-hungry, weary pain, that Georgia told herself she might unbare her very soul to him."

"Theo! Theo! I have been so wicked, and I am so sorry! I am come to you, in such penitence, to ask you to forgive me and take me home to your heart! Oh, my husband, if you knew of all the pride I have conquered to take this step! If you dreamed, only, of how I love you, more, infinitely more this moment than even in our happiest days."

She was standing closely beside him now, her yearning eyes meeting his in an eloquence of passionate beseeching; her red lips parted, through which the tide of words had flowed; her fair white throat beating, her breast heaving with the agitation of the moment.

"Georgia!"

All he said was the one word, her name, but the tone struck the deathly chill to her heart. Was it among the possibilities that he would deny her! The thought agonized her. This woman, who had endured silently for years and years; this woman to whom her husband's love was her very existence, late as the revelation had come.

She suddenly released her hold of his hand, and, with a low, pitiful cry, slid down on her knees at his feet, her glorious head bowed on her bosom, her hands clasped in mute humility.

"See—see, Theo Lexington, how I, your injured wife, humble myself before you, craving the love I never should ask for! I tell you I am suffering in spirit because I was so cruel to you—I tell you I am repentant—when I tell you—oh, Theo! I love you! I love you so I can think of nothing else! I would die here, at your feet, to give you a moment's happiness! Won't you take me back again, and let us begin a new, blessed life?"

Lexington stood like a statue while she spoke, while she poured at his feet the libation of her woman's love. His eyes took in her rare beauty, his heart throbbed in answer to all she had said. He could barely restrain himself; he demanded the strongest power of self-control he ever had combated with, to refuse himself the bliss of taking her in his arms for once, forever, nevermore to be parted.

But, Frank Havelstock had predicted this; Frank, in his purely disinterested kindness, had shown him the way to walk to avoid being made a silly dupe of by the woman to whom he had humbled himself, and been spurned. The memory of that scene would have faded forever in the glory of Georgia's eyes had not he been so sure of Georgia's acting, in this instance—in such perfect, accordant harmony with what Frank had led him to expect.

So, with an overbrimming chalice of happiness presented to his panting lips by Georgia's own hand, he turned away, in quiet, proud refusal.

"You do right to sue for my pardon, and I accord it freely, fully. Rise, Georgia, I beg. The floor is chilly."

Georgia heard his reply in a strange, vague trance of amazed horror and despair.

Had he really spurned her—her?

She arose, quivering with excitement; her eyes dilated in bewildered anguish, her hands clonched in bodily pain; from her face all its beautiful enthusiasm had faded, leaving her pallid to ghastliness.

"You—you refuse—me?"

She gasped the words as if the full force of his conduct could hardly be believed.

"As you rejected me, I reject you. You have asked my pardon for spurning me this morning; you say nothing of your penitence for the treachery that, years ago, you committed. You need not rave of love—that is dead and buried—a grave is between us of a verity. Not the grave of Carleton Vincyl's child—but the tomb of slaughtered affection."

Her head was proudly erect now; her nostrils faintly quivered in the heat of her wounded pride, her mortified womanhood. When she started, it was in a voice so feebly clear and composed as to startle him, for the instant, by its contrast to her previous emotion.

"I never shall forget this insult, never. You are right; there is a grave between us, and each of us will live and die on opposite sides. But remember—remember, Mr. Lexington, it is all over between us forever. When you repent of this hour—and repent you will—may a hundredfold of my anguish overwhelm you, and may you know what I know this moment—the despair of a broken heart!"

She tottered away, leaning on every chair or pillar she passed, until she gained the hall, and went wearily to her room.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

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(To be continued—commenced in No. 298.)

Pacific Pete, The Prince of the Revolver.

BY JOS. E. BADGER, JR.,
AUTHOR OF "OLD BULL'S-EYE," "YELLOW-
STONE JACK," ETC.

CHAPTER XII.

A LITTLE GAME OF "DRAW."

ABOUT noon, on that same day, Old Business declared his intention of paying Windy Gap a visit. Both Pike and Mark sought to dissuade him, declaring that it would be worse than folly to obtrude himself upon the notice of their enemies. We have seen how consistent Mark was; but then he had an unusually fair excuse for contradicting himself.

"You fellows don't look at the thing in a judgmental light," quoth Old Business, quietly.

"Who knows anything about our doings, last night? Nobody kept the ones we licked in the first place—nor you kin bet they won't squeal on themselves—nor the partners of the boy I wiped out. They might get me lynched, for revenge, but in doin' it they'd lose all chance of sharin' in my 'pocket'—so you see 'tain't no great risk I run, after all."

Whether he really placed faith in this rather dubious safeguard or not, Old Business entered Windy Gap with the careless ease of one who has nothing to fear. If he noticed the gaunt figure of Hank Hurley shadowing him, he made no sign.

What his object was in entering the town, can only be surmised. He stopped at the Metropolitan Hotel and took a drink at the bar, leisurely surveying the half a dozen customers who were lazily lounging around the rusty, cold stove, discussing the opening night at the Golden Horn. Neither the subject nor the talkers appeared to have any interest for the old hunter, and paying for his drink, he strolled down the crooked street.

After a rapid but close scrutiny of Pacific Pete's building—now closed, even to the heavy wooden shutters—Old Business entered the Hole in the Wall. Apparently the Sabbath day never crossed that threshold. Though undoubtedly it was a day of rejoicing for "Orleans Jess"—the dark, quadroon-looking keeper—it certainly was not one of rest. Not only the sports of Windy Gap, but many miners from claims for miles around, congregated here every Sabbath day, to enjoy a "drunk," and to double or lose their week's earnings at the poker-table.

The sweet-scented crowd I've struck sense I tended church in St. Loney!" approvingly remarked Old Business, taking a leisurely survey of the assembly. "Gentlemen, this is me—Old Business in a minute, you bet! The purp who's jest struck it richer 'n any other whelp in ten counties! Step up an'

nominate your pizon. I b'long to the church, but I'm goin' to git drunker 'n a b'iled owl this deal, you kin jest go your pile on that!"

Many a more polished address has been delivered, but certainly none more successful than this. As one man the crowd advanced, the majority caring only for getting a free drink, but a few interchanged rapid but intelligible glances, as the ragged hunter drew forth a heavy pouch of golden nuggets and "beans," bidding Orleans Jess help himself.

"You're new to these parts, I reckon, stranger?" observed Vinegar Sol, a tall, sharp-faced man in a rakish hat and flashy suit of

plaid.

"Not exactly. I was here when Dick's Pocket was just struck. I lost sight of a pard, an' tuck in this run, thinkin' mebbe he'd follered the big rush. His name in the States was Dick Austin—a tall, fine-lookin' critter—you'd take 'im fer a gospel-slinger at first sight, he was so 'figious."

"There has been no reward offered for information concerning his whereabouts, I dare say," half inquired a little red-faced man—the same whom the reader may have remarked on the occasion rendered memorable by the "little argument" between Pacific Pete and Big Tom Noxon.

"Not that I knows on, but—" and Old Business produced from the depths of his rags a nugget of almost virgin gold, nearly the size of a hen's egg. "You see this? Waal, I'll give that to the critter who kin tell me anythin' 'artin' 'bout my man."

"I claim the reward, then," eagerly cried the "bummer," his eyes sparkling. "You spoke of Dick's Pocket a moment since. Well, your friend was the discoverer—"

"You don't mean—"

"But I do. Gospel Dick we all called him, because he was never seen without a Bible—and he delivered some excellent sermons, too. Then he was robbed and lost his mind—became a lunatic, in fact, and roamed far and wide, searching for the man who had murdered him (that's just the way he expressed it) and stolen his gold. You know how he discovered the 'big pocket'—but he was dead when found. Very likely he never knew that he was dying upon a bed of almost solid gold."

"But the proof—how kin I tell that this is my pard?"

"I knew him before his injury—I saw him before he was buried, and was allowed to keep this key-check as a memorial of my departed friend," replied the bummer, handing Old Business a small silver check, bearing the name, "J. R. AUSTIN," then adding: "My name is Horace Walpole Dobbs. You can ask any of these gentlemen as to my veracity. They all know me."

"You kin trust him in anythin', stranger, 'cept whar whisky is consarned," testified Orleans Jess.

Old Business passed the nugget over to Horace Walpole Dobbs, without a word. There was a grave shade upon his usually rollicking face that evidenced how keenly the information had touched him. The miners and "sports" noticed this fact, and with a consideration scarcely to be expected, returned to their respective tables and resumed their play.

But the old hunter was not one to long remain bowed down, and his face soon resumed its wonted look of reckless good-nature, as he strolled around the poker-tables, now commenting upon a hand-of course after the deal was over—and interspersing his remarks with queer expressions that caused all anger at his criticisms to vanish before a hearty laugh, now watching the game in silence.

"You 'pear to be pritty well posted on the pastboards, old man," at length remarked Vinegar Sol, who, by-the-by, had been playing a miserable hand ever since Old Business came in. "Ef you're good on the draw as you air on the talk, I reckon you'd be a tough cuss at poker. Yif I don't mind tryin' ye a turn or two, jest to pass the time."

"Young man, look whar ye gwine," responded Old Business, with a ludicrous nasal twang. "The trail afore ye is crookeder 'n the horns of a ten-year-old burro, an' kivered all 'long with sand, snags, nettles, prickly p'ars, an' pizon tarantules o' 'tarnal death a-waitin' to ketch you by the heel an' tote you down to the kitchen whar fire an' brimstone is plentier nor crawlin' critters on a Ute buck."

"Pent, sinner, 'pent—'pent afore the devil 'calls' ye, fer then it'll be too late. You never ketch him holdin' less 'n four aces, wif hafe a dozen more safe in the crook o' his tail, ready in case you ring in a 'Arkansas deck' on 'im. Whar's the use in buckin' aginst a critter as is alays shore to overdraw ye? Ye boun' to lose—an' what then? Oh! you pore mizzable sinner—you blind, two-legged shoe o' moral ragginess, which don't got no more sense than to keep a rootin' 'long the trail which leads down to never come back agin—look on this picter, an' then ax me agin to jine you. You boun' to lose—what then? What does the good book say? Don't it say the devil 'll jump your claim! Jest think how ye'll feel down thar—you settin' on a sharp-pinted stone which is white hot, a-eatin' 'll bin' brimstone with a red-hot scoop-shovel, while the boss devil stan' over ye, 'casionaly stirrin' ye up wif his forty-tined pitchfork! How's that fer high, anyhow?"

"Ef you wasn't so powerful ugly, durned if I wouldn't bet big money on your being a woman, your tongue runs so pesky nimble," retorted Vinegar Sol. "But what say? You ain't afeard to take a little turn at 'draw'?"

"Me afeard? You don't know me, boss—not much! Thar's only one 'bjection. I'm little old lightnin' on the draw—I'm sure to bust every critter I play with. Can't help it—the keards will run that a-way, anyhow. It's good enough for me, but somehow, 'otter fellows don't like it so well. That makes hard feelin's, ye see—"

"What a fellow wins in these parts I reckon he's fairly 'titled to," grinned Vinegar Sol. "Ef we win, good enough; but ef we lose we ain't the boys to squeal—not much!"

"You're the kind I like to meet, pard—but you'll play kinder light at first, won't ye? Don't run the old man too hard!" quietly said Old Business, taking a seat at the table on the side opposite the door.

A four-handed party was quickly made up, and the bystanders interchanged smiles of keen amusement as the game opened. Vinegar Sol, Keno Dan and Billy Breeze had, for years, divided the honors of being the "boss poker players" in the Valley Mines. Yet, as the game progressed the match seemed more even. Either Old Business possessed a power of manipulating the cards little short of marvelous, or else, as he said, he was a prime favorite of fortune. Though in reality it was a match of three players against one, the pile of gold lying before the old man seemed never to shrink beneath its first dimensions, while it was often more than double its first value. The bystanders were enthusiastic. Never before had they witnessed such a perfect exposition of the beauties of "draw." But the game

was to end without either party gaining a decisive victory.

A quick, firm tread at the door drew all eyes in that direction, and the crowd silently made way before the bar. The new-comer was Pacific Pete, and his white, hard-set face, his glittering eyes and compressed lips, betokened a dangerous mood. He took a quick survey of the crowd, then, in a sharp voice, ordered, rather than requested them, to join him.

Pacific Pete was not a man to be lightly refused at any time, much less now, when he was already "boiling over," as the expression runs. He had just come down from the hills, where Mark Austin had so coolly bluffed him.

At the entrance Old

the door knob, and turning this, Mark quickly but noiselessly pushed the door wide open—then stood like one petrified.

Was he dreaming—had he fallen asleep only to awake in some enchanted land? Surely this could not be real—in rude, uncouth Windy Gap!

A subdued light filled the room. The warm air was delicately perfumed—the very light and atmosphere of love. The room was richly upholstered; the floor covered with a velvet pile; the walls concealed by curtains of rose-colored silk; rich paintings were upon the wall; at the further end of the apartment stood a richly curtained bed; all this Mark took in at a glance. But his eye rested longer upon the one occupant of the apartment.

Upon a *tele-a-tele* had reclined the lady-dealer of the night before, dressed in crimson and lace, as then, only, to the young miner's eyes, looking even more lovely now in the subdued light.

At that moment she glanced up and noticed him standing upon the threshold. Her face flushed deeply, as she half arose and beckoned him to advance. Feeling a little abashed in his coarse clothes, Mark nevertheless obeyed and returned her greeting without visible awkwardness.

"You were greatly surprised at receiving my note, were you not?" softly uttered the lady, resuming her position and motioning for Mark to follow her example.

"Indeed I was, lady—but at the same time could not help feeling pleasure at the thought of your not having forgotten me."

"Very neatly spoken—and yet you have kept me waiting fully an hour," she laughed, softly. "But there—I did not send for you merely to exchange compliments. Mr. Austin, I believe that you are a gentleman. This may be our last—though I sincerely trust not—our last meeting, as it is our first, save that of last night. And now—since I have spoken of that—will you tell me frankly what you thought of my position then?"

"That it was beneath you—that such a life must be horrible to one such as you—a lady," slowly replied Mark.

"You wish to spare me—and I thank you. Last night I read your thoughts far plainer than I can now. Better for me, perhaps, had I never attempted to fathom them—had I only regarded you as one of the common herd—a gambler, with no higher thought than how to place a lucky stake. But we are all blind sometimes; last night was my turn. From trying to read your thoughts, I—bosh! I feel as though I were dreaming! I can scarcely see your face now. You are not a conjuror!"

Mark muttered a dissent, not very intelligibly. He could fully appreciate the force of her remark. He too felt as though in a dream. The room, perfumed air, the weird light, the beautiful woman beside him, so close that her garments touched his, her wondrous eyes, now lustrous, swimming in a languid yet burning light, her perfumed breath mingling with his, the soft, white hand, so warm and velvety, now resting lightly upon his wrist—all these combined might well have unsteered a stronger head than his.

"You must be a Mesmerist—else why have you this strange power over me? No one else has the power to affect me so strongly—what is it? Tell me!"

Mark shook his head helplessly. It was all an enigma to him. Had he been a bystander, merely, he would have laughed and said: "Love-struck both of 'em—got it bad, too!"

"Listen," and the woman spoke rapidly, in a low tone, but full of expression and pathos. "I felt this power last night—when I first saw you, and that made me have you seated directly in front of me. I felt it growing stronger and stronger with every glance of your eyes, until it was only with a strong exertion of will that I could attend to my duties. I only saw you, of all the players—I dealt for you alone. You had never played faro before—the manner in which you bet plainly evidenced that. I dealt for you alone. The others might lose or win, I cared little; but I played for you to win. When a professional gambler does that, is it not a strong proof of interest? Bah! what matters that, now?"

"I did not send for you to tell you this—but to in part explain why you found me in such a position. You may not care to know—you may go away from here and laugh heartily over my folly—may even jest with your friends."

"You wrong me, lady," warmly interrupted Mark. "What you confide to me, shall never pass my lips."

"I believe it—from the bottom of my heart I believe it. I could not be so deceived in you. You would be a loyal friend—true to the core. I know that. Ah! had we only met in better days—then I might possibly have found such a friend! But now, what am I? An outcast—one whom all men may sneer at—even insult, as that cur did last night?"

"A lady through all—that you are, and that I'll maintain," earnestly cried Mark, his hands closing over hers.

"You are laughing at me—and yet, I would give half my remaining rays to believe that you are sincere—that you will be my friend; one in whom I can confide, on whose truth and fidelity I could rely! I have dreamt of such a friend; will you be such a one?"

"God helping me, I will!" solemnly replied Mark.

Isabella bowed her head over his hands, and touched her red lips to them. There was a glowing light in her eyes—a light that was almost fierce in its intensity.

The warm pressure nearly unnerved Mark, and he drew his hands away almost rudely. Isabella looked into his eyes half reproachfully.

"You are offended at my gratitude?"

"No; not that; but for you to kiss my hands!"

"I know I have no right; you are a gentleman, while I—I am nothing but the gambler's sister."

"You are cruel, lady—really cruel. You surely never thought that of me," muttered Mark, his voice anything but steady. "I may be too sensitive—I believe I did wrong you. But in some things I am a perfect child. Let me hold your hands; it will give me courage to tell you my story. If we are never to meet again—which the saints forbid—I would like you to know me as I really am, not as my position now would seem to prove. Thanks; now I feel better."

And so did Mark; he would have been more or less than man, else. A lovely woman close beside him, her soft, warm hands clasped around his, her lustrous eyes looking into his, a world of love in their depths, her perfumed breath barely touching his cheek. Yes, Mark was in no little danger.

CHAPTER XIV.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

Yes, Mark was in a situation of no little danger, and yet he enjoyed it. Few men

wouldn't. There are some perils which even a confirmed coward would like to hug closely to his breast—for instance, Madame Isabella.

"Do you know, I was really afraid of you at first," softly breathed Isabella, gently patting Mark's hands as she gazed confidently into his face. "You looked so strict, so excessively proper. I like you better now; your brow is smooth, your eyes are gentle, there is a smile upon your lips. I am not afraid of you, while you wear such a look."

"You shall never have cause for fearing me, lady."

"Call me Isabella; we are to be friends, the best of friends; then why so much formality?"

"On condition that you call me Mark, Isabella."

"A bargain—Mark!" gleefully cried Isabella, drawing still nearer the young miner and nestling herself down into a most comfortable position. "And now, you will listen to my story? It is not long, though a painful one."

"If painful, why recall its memory now? Surely you cannot believe that it is needed? I believe that you are a pure, true-hearted woman, nor would I believe myself mistaken were the whole world to declare otherwise."

"I thank you! from my heart I thank you, Mark," faltered Isabella, her swimming eyes looking up into his, her hand almost touching his breast as it rested lightly against his arm. "But I have nerved myself to tell you all, and I must not falter. You have met my brother—they call him Pacific Pete?"

"Yes, I saw him to-day, on the ridge," and as he spoke, Mark flushed hotly, drawing himself more erect.

The words in a manner recalled his senses. As the face of Edna Brand, so frank and open, so lovely in its womanly purity, rose before him, the comparison was scarcely favorable to Isabella, so different in every respect, save that both were beautiful. The one would nerve a man to dare and endure all for the right; the other—Mark checked his thoughts, with a feeling of self-reproach at having even momentarily doubted her, as Isabella looked full into his eyes.

"I know. You were there with Miss Brand. I saw you as you escorted her to the hotel. But I was speaking of my brother. He came in last night, just as you left the hall. It was from him that I learned your name. He has been a kind, true-hearted brother to me, and I trust you two will become good friends. And yet, it is on his account that I am what you see—the outcast, the degraded."

"My sister—and not even you must slander her," said Mark, gently placing his palm above her ruby lips.

"This nothing but the truth, though I thank you all the same," replied Isabella, with a grateful look. "But let me tell my story. 'We are Southerners, brother and I, natives of Louisiana. Our family were an old and aristocratic one—the Keyes of Cypress Hill, at one time the richest and most influential in the State. But in grandfather's time, we began to go down the hill. Those were days of heavy gaming, when entire plantations, with all the stock, hipped and quadrupeds, were sometimes placed upon the turn of a card. Unfortunately my father followed faithfully in his parents' footsteps. Sometimes fortune favored him, and then his profuse hospitality and lavish generosity would have shamed a prince. There could only be one ending. It came; we were beggars. When father realized what he had done, his mind must have given way, for he shot himself—fell dead across the table where he had lost his all."

"Misfortunes came fast upon us. Brother Edward—there were but two—was at New Orleans when he heard the news, and returned at once to our home—to what was our home, I mean. Though a good, dear brother, he has a terrible temper. A word, at times, will set him on fire, and then it would be as easy to check a prairie fire as the torrent of his rage."

"I had never met him in one of these fits, until that day. He believed that father had been foully dealt with—that he had been swindled, if not murdered afterward to conceal the crime. He would hear no reason; he rushed away from the house, and when he returned, there was blood upon his hands! He had sought out the man who had won our all, and after a brief quarrel, had shot him dead. "Only for me, I believe brother would have remained and dared all—have surrendered the house only with his life. But I pleaded with him, told him that he was my only protector now, that without him I must die of want or come to worse. He yielded, none too soon. A faithful servant warned us of our danger—that a strong force of neighbors were approaching, uttering fierce threats against the murderer!"

"We mounted our horses and fled, riding without drawing rein until nearly daylight. That day we remained hidden in the woods. But this part of our story can be summed up in a few words. We escaped pursuit, made our way into Texas, and finally settled down in Nacogdoches."

"It was here that brother first gave signs of having inherited the fatal passion of his forefathers; he was a gambler to the core. Yet, unlike them, he seemed a favorite of fortune. He rarely lost, almost invariably won, and sometimes in large amounts. True to his class—for you will find no more generous men than the true, professional gambler—he scattered his gold on every hand, now 'staking' a comrade, now setting a friend in business, furnishing the capital for running a faro-bank. At times we were literally rolling in gold, then again we suffered the acute pangs of poverty, sometimes even lacking the means of food."

"It was after an unusually hard run of luck, when I was growing thin and actually faint for lack of food, that brother, rendered desperate by his continued reverses, too proud to beg a loan from his friends—it was in this trouble that he first disgraced himself. His antagonist detected him cheating; to no one but you, dear friend, could I acknowledge this, but I know that you will understand his feelings. He could not see me starve; for himself he cared nothing."

"He was accused of cheating. Maddened by the shame of the discovery, brother added murder to his crime. In the confusion he escaped unharmful. He told me what had occurred, and poured into my lap the blood-stained gold. He said that he must flee, that the friends of the dead man would hunt him down without mercy. He tried to persuade me to, but I was resolved not to desert him. Within half an hour we were riding rapidly away from the town, on two mustangs paid for with the blood-money."

"But why tell you of our life, step by step? From what I have already said, you can imagine the rest. It was one series of success and reverses. We remained stationary longest in the city of Mexico. Brother had a large gambling hall there. The bank was finally broken, just as the first rumors of the gold discovery in California flashed like lightning over the land. We came here; it was the same story, for a time. But then fortune changed. Gold poured upon us in a constant stream."

At this day, I believe brother and I are the two richest persons in America. And yet, can it bring back our lost respectability? No, we are outcasts; outcasts we must remain. We have no friends, no people—my God! do you wonder that at times I fear I am going mad?"

Overcome by strong emotion, Isabella allowed her head to sink against Mark's breast, her face upturned to his, though her eyes were closed, a pearly tear trembling upon the long, silken lashes. Mark's left arm gently closed around her supple form as though involuntarily, and, deeply affected by her sad story, he bowed his head as though to brush away the tears with his lips.

Isabella opened her eyes, lustrous and glowing, despite the moisture. Her bosom heaved convulsively, and she drew his right hand to her breast, pressing it tightly there, as though to still the wild throbbings of her heart. Her red, ripe lips parted—the picture might have tempted Saint Anthony himself.

Mark made no pretence of being a saint. He was a man; the young blood ran hotly in his veins, and he acted as any other man would, under similar circumstances.

His lips met hers in a long, passionate kiss, a kiss such as sets the brain in a whirl, that tingles through every nerve and fiber; a kiss such as has led to the utter destruction of many a noble spirit.

Thus, lip to lip, eye to eye—then Mark drew back, half terrified by the wild, dazzling fire that filled those wondrous orbs. Despite himself, he recalled a story read not many years before—that weird, fantastic creation of Balzac: "THE SCORCUBUS." The eyes whose subtle fire consumed so many hearts, must have been akin to the orbs now looking into his. The surroundings, too, of almost oriental magnificence, the perfumed air—all combined to heighten the resemblance, and Mark drew back with a tremor of almost superstitious awe.

Isabella could not help noticing this abrupt change, and her flushed cheek paled, as she murmured:

"You are angry with me; how have I offended you?"

"I am not offended, only—'tis growing late, and I have a long walk before me," muttered Mark, who, now that his momentary infatuation was over, began to wonder how he could end the interview.

"Must we part thus? Ah! I was supremely happy for a moment; if it could only last! Mark; my master, my king!" and her arms wound eagerly around him, while her face neared his, her warm breath playing upon his cheek. "You must not leave me. I cannot live without you; I will not! Nay, hear me. Is it such a terrible thing that you need grow so pale? Listen! From the moment when I first set eyes upon you, I loved you—loved you with a fire and intensity of which you cold Northerners can have no conception. And now, now that your lips have touched mine, your arm clasped me to your breast, I would die were you to leave me. I am not exacting—true love never is. I don't ask so much. Only your love; love me, that is all I ask. Surely, 'twill not be so hard?" and she drew her superb figure erect.

Mark sat there in silence, confounded—as Old Business would have expressed it—like a bump on a log. He knew not what answer to make. The scales had, in a measure, fallen from his eyes. It was passion, not love, that had led him into this little indiscretion. The fair face of Edna Brand arose before him, as if reproachfully; that image degraded him. He must extricate himself; but how?

"You do not answer—Sir Iceberg! Can nothing I say; can I do nothing to thaw you?" softly breathed Isabella, nestling closer to his side, looking eagerly into his eyes. "I am far from being an iceberg, Miss Keyes."

"Your promise forgotten, already—Miss Keyes?"

"Pardon me; I scarcely know what I am saying or doing. 'Tis growing late; I must go," stammered Mark, dreading a scene.

"Without one word?" And the dark eyes changed their hue.

"Perhaps 'twould be better. Believe me, I am grateful for the confidence you have placed in me."

"Grateful; and in so cold a tone! I do not ask your gratitude, your sympathy; I ask more, I ask your love! Mark, do you understand me? I love you; love you so madly that I could almost tear you to pieces! Can you understand such love? In this I feel like a tigress, who cares not for life. But, no; you will not understand me! Yes, you must; you must. Mark, I ask little; little to you, but much, oh! so much to me! I beg your love; think of that. I ask nothing more. I will be your slave; only love me a little. I have gold in thousands. We will go far away, where no one knows us, and be—"

Mark arose with a sudden gesture. "That can never be. I have acted foolishly—criminally, perhaps, led away by my sympathy for your sad story, but this must end now. My heart is no longer my own. I have no love to give you."

For a moment, Isabella cowered before him, pale and ghastly, breathing hard, like one sorely wounded. Then she arose, pale and statuesque.

"You refuse; you scorn my love? This is your answer?"

"Not scorn—"

"It is the same. Very well; be it so! You have seen how powerfully I could love; you shall learn how intensely I can hate. You can go now, because you are beneath my roof, and hospitality is sacred, even to the outcast, the degraded being whom you so proudly cast aside. But, Mark Austin, proud as you are, the time will come when, upon your bended knees, you shall beg as an inestimable boon, the love which you now so scornfully reject. And then—then I will remind you of this night."

She touched a bell, and the giant negro quickly answered the summons. Mark followed his sable conductor in silence.

The impetuous outbreak had awed him, and he felt a dull, heavy weight upon his spirits as he strode through the town.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 296.)

The ship Western Empire, seven of whose crew were recently drowned in endeavoring to land on the Florida coast near Apalachicola, has been found thirty miles north of Jupiter Inlet. The ship was caught in a storm three days after leaving Pensacola, and was dismasted, waterlogged, and abandoned. She subsequently made a voyage of more than five hundred miles, drifted within the influence of the Gulf Stream, and on toward the Atlantic, until she was discovered near Jupiter Inlet, swinging to an anchor. At the time of the disaster the anchors were let go to bring the ship's head to the wind. The vessel piloted itself around the dangerous coast of Florida, with its keys and reefs, until the anchor reached bottom.

"AT LAST."

Once 't was my saddest thought,
And I began to doubt you,
That some time I must learn,
Perhaps, to do without you.

For Death parts dearest friends;
From him there's no escaping;
And partings worse than death,
Our fears are ever shaping.

Now with new dawns of hope
No thought of you is blended;
Day deepens evermore, I see
That morning dreams are ended.

And now the saddest thought
That haunts my heart about you
Is this—that I have learned,
At last, to do without you.

Tied to the Track!

A STATION-MASTER'S STORY.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

ALONG about the years sixty-seven and eight it got to be altogether too common a thing on our line putting sleepers across the track and tearing up rails, to throw the train off, so as to rob the express car; and some of the villains who were caught got pretty severe sentences. It so happened that in an especially noteworthy case it was my own evidence chiefly that convicted two of the most precious rascals who ever set eyes on, Tom Jackson and Clint Parker by name. They were sent to Joliet for fifteen years, and I was mighty glad to serve as "humane instrument" in the case, I tell you; though sometimes I did feel kind of squeamish-like when I'd repeat to myself the last words Parker said as they took him out of court: "As for you, Joe Townsend" (and he shook his fist significantly in my direction), "all this comes of the cowardly lies you've sworn to; and I want you to understand that Tom Jackson and me, we ain't the men to stay down at Joliet for fifteen years, breaking stone. We're goin' to git out, we are, and you may depend upon it we'll be kearf to pay our first respec's to you. We've invented a new kind of sleeper to throw trains off with, eh, Tom?" and he leered horribly to his crony as they passed through the door.

Those last words of Parker's I turned over in my mind a good many times during the next two years. Somehow or other they stuck by me. "We've invented a new kind of sleeper to throw a train off the track."

I kind of felt as though he meant something unusual by that, although I could not make out what. It seemed that I was to find out, though, before many months.

My house, where my wife and the babies live, is just about three-quarters of a mile below the station, and quite near the track. I generally get through at the depot at half-past eight, as soon as the accommodation goes down. The night express, which goes through at 9:55, doesn't pull up at R—at all, and the through freight, which meets it down the road a piece, at W—, of course I have nothing to do with. I might mention here that the road is double-track the entire length; but there is a long bridge at W—, so that the freight always waits there for the express.

At half-past eight, then, as I say, I'm at liberty for the night, and it doesn't take me long to shut up the depot and start off down the road for home; and a lonely enough tramp it is, I tell you, even on a bright night, for the track runs all the way through woods and swamps, and it's mighty dark and uncomfortable at best.

Well, the night I'm going to tell you about was black as the inside of a two-mile tunnel. When I started down the track I almost wished I'd gone around by the highway, for I had to feel my way half the time. However, I knew the path tolerably well, and could tell where all the culverts and dangerous places were pretty nearly. So I held up my lantern like the head-light of a locomotive and stumbled along, making pretty good time on the whole.

I must have been just about half-way home, I guess, when all at once, without the slightest idea on my part that any human being was within half a mile of me, I felt a pair of arms clasped around my waist with a strength it was impossible to overcome; then, suddenly, I was thrown down, the light from a more powerful lantern than mine (which had fallen from my hand and become extinguished), flashed about me, and by its glare I saw three powerful fellows, who, in spite of my struggles, and I am no baby, proceeded to tie my hands firmly behind me. I did not recognize them at all, at length, as I lay there on my back, entirely helpless, one of them snatched the lantern from his companion and held it close down to me, while he brought his own face close to mine.

"Wall, Joe Townsend," he said, "do you know me?"

"Yes, I know you, Clint Parker," I answered, as coolly as I could.

"I thought as how mebbe ye would. I didn't mean to stay down there to Joliet so long by my dearest friend would forgit me. I've ben thinkin' 'bout you, Joe, most all the time while I was down there gittin' up my muscle breakin' stone. And here's another feller you may remember—leastways he hain't forgot you, eh, Tom?"—and I now recognized Tom Jackson, the other prisoner of two years before. The third man I had never seen.

"This place 'll do as well as any, I s'pose," Parker went on, presently. "What's the time, Jem?" Jem consulted his watch, and pronounced it to be about nine.

"All right; he'll have jest about fifty minutes to think things over in and repent having lied about two such exemplary gentlemen as Tom Jackson and myself—eh, Tom?"—and Tom chuckled approvingly.

"Now git out all these ropes," still Parker went on. He seemed to be the leading spirit and spokesman of the enterprise. "Do ye know what we're goin' to do with yer, Joe? We ain't goin' to throw no trains off the track. Oh, no! Tom and me, we wouldn't do nothin' of that kind—eh, Tom? But we're goin' to let you throw one off. I told ye, ye know, that Tom and we'd discovered a new kind of sleeper for throwin' trains with. We're jest goin' to tie you down here across the track awhile, thet's all. We wouldn't do nothin' cruel—eh, Tom?"

So their hellish purpose was revealed at last. They were going to tie me to the track and let the train pass over me! I confess that at that moment my limbs actually shook with fear. It was not only death within less than an hour that I was to suffer, but death in a most violent and horrible form. Certainly a revenge worthy of two such monsters as stood there gloating over my misery. For a moment I thought only of myself. Then I groaned aloud as I remembered Jennie and the little ones. I don't know why I should be ashamed to tell it—I doubt if there are many men who would not have done the same in my place—but I just sunk down on my knees then and there, and begged those heartless villains

to forego their desperate purpose. I might as well have gone on my knees to the great iron monster that would be along in so short a time to crush me. They only laughed merrily over my despair, and began their work.

You'll acknowledge yourself, gentlemen, that it's rather a dismal look for a poor fellow to be gagged and bound, hand and foot, and then be tied fast across a railroad track with his neck across one rail and his feet over the other, and to know that in something like half an hour's time a fast express train is coming down that very track without paying any attention to him whatever—and this in a dark, drizzly night, and in a lonely spot where no human being is at all likely to find him. And that's the way those double-dyed scoundrels left me—they tied me there fast and firm—they mockingly bade me good-night and pleasant dreams—the leader, Parker, even stooped over me and kissed me with pretended tenderness, and I felt his hot, liquor-freighted breath on my cheek. And yet I could not cry out in my agony nor curse them in my desperation as they moved off.

No words of mine, gentlemen, can describe the horror and agony I felt during the time I lay there. You can not half imagine it—I doubt if I can recall it now as it really was myself. I go over it again and again in my sleep to this day—fancy myself once more bound down to that fearful rack, powerless to stir hand or foot, yet striving with almost superhuman force to burst the ropes that bind me—till I finally seem to succeed and awake shrieking from the horrid nightmare, with the sweat standing out in great drops upon my brow.

But I did not burst my bonds that night. The villains had taken good care of that. There I was in a most painful position, bound by the neck to one rail, and by the ankles to the other, my hands tied beneath me, and my body fastened to a sleeper. Oh, God! how I did struggle to free myself; how I sought to wrench away my legs; how I tugged at the cord which bound my wrists; and then, since I could not get them free, as I thought of the fearful death so soon to come upon me, how I strove to throttle myself with the rope that held my head to the rail. How I prayed that I might suffocate there as I lay. I have heard that men have died of terror, but I don't believe it. If such a thing were possible, I think I should have perished in those dreadful moments. But I did not. Oh, no! The murderers were to have their fullest revenge.

And now, suddenly I grew strangely calm. I philosophized with myself. I said resignedly, that a man could die but once; and after all, what would it matter an hour hence. Besides, in reality, this was an instantaneous and almost painless end. But my wife and children! Oh, I would like to live to them. And could I not? I was not dead yet. If I could only move myself a few feet. Oh, so very few feet! Yet I could not stir.

Now, a thought struck me. Could I not signal the train in some way, stop it one little yard, or foot, or inch, before it passed over me? Alas, how! They would never hear my cries. They would never see me in the darkness of the night. No one would know until the morning, and then I should be, alas! crushed, and mangled, and dead.

But my lantern; where was that? I turned my head, and could see it a few feet away, where I had dropped it. If I only had it in my breast, I could draw up my pocket with my teeth, I thought, and somehow get a match from it, and so light the lantern. And in my insane terror, I called out to it, and begged it to come nearer, and save my wretched life. You may smile at that, gentlemen, but human nature is weaker than you think, and I believe I am as good a man, ordinarily as the most.

But all this time the minutes were flying by like lightning. Horrible as that hour was to me, I could have wished it was all eternity. Every instant I dreaded to hear the train coming. I knew it must be well high for time for it now, and I knew that it was on time, for we had telegraphed it an hour before. I will not dwell longer on my sufferings. I did not free myself. I could not, if the salvation of the race had depended upon it. Nor did anybody come to free me. No one would ever pass that spot on a night like that, and at such an hour. Nor was the train behind time. No, I heard it at last; it was no creation of my excited fancy this time. I heard it at last, first a faint, rumbling sound, that seemed to come from deep down in the earth, beneath me; then the ground seemed to thrill and tremble; then the rails rattled a little, then more and more; then I heard the whistle, and bell; and then, oh, God! another instant, and it would be upon me! I could even see the reflected glare of the headlight.

I tried once more to cry out; I struggled again for an instant, with all the power of my being; then I knew that my time was come, and I shut my eyes and lay quite still. And the great train came rushing on and on—it was close upon me—I saw it not, yet I felt it to be directly above me. Great heavens! what was this? Was it passing over me and I still living, and feeling it not? I opened my eyes; I saw the cars flashing by above and within a few feet of my head. Then the truth flashed upon me. The train was upon the other track! The reaction was too much for me, and I fainted dead away.

When I came to consciousness again, I found myself in my own room at home. I had only a confused recollection of the events which had so lately befallen me, but they told me gently all that I did not know of the story.

I had been very ill, they said, of brain fever. They had found me on the morning of that terrible night, bound fast—not to the railroad-track, but to a tree, just a few rods away from it. I was very delirious, and was taken home raving continually. I had been sick for a fortnight. Then they asked how it was that I came to be tied to the tree. But, alas, I knew as little of that part of the story as they did. I told them how I had been seized by Parker and his companions, and tied to the track. My lantern, found near the spot, and distinct marks of a struggle, confirmed the story. The question was, how did I escape the train, and how did I become tied to the tree? My own theory is this: Parker and Jackson were not, after all, so bad as I took them to be. Their revenge had been, not to murder me, but to frighten me terribly; and they certainly had succeeded perfectly. I could see nothing, tied as I was, could hardly turn my head, and they had easily persuaded me into the idea that I was on the down track—that of the passenger-express. After the train had passed, they had come to release me before the freight should be along. They had fastened me to the tree so as to get fully away before I could give any alarm. That is the only way I can account for the facts. And though I certainly don't owe the rascals anything for what they did to me, I never think of the affair to this day without feeling a kind of gratitude toward them, and thanking God they were not as black-hearted as I thought they were, after all.

STRANDED.

BY T. O. HARBAUGH.

Just beyond the harbor bar,
Where the waves are tipped with white,
Lies the old ship, fairer far,
Than the moonbeams of to-night.

See the lengthening shadows creep
O'er the old bulk, water-worn;
Still upon her broken peak
Floats her banner, sadly torn.

In and out her port-holes grim,
Rush the angry waves with glee;
And the song they ceaseless sing
Is the triumph of the sea!

Old hulk hewn from Norway's pines,
Struck by hands of giants made!
I could tell you how she ran
Many a vigilant blockade.

In the gloom of night she struck,
When the ocean gale was high;
Hear the crested waves to-night
Sing her dolorous lullaby!

I could tell you how she sailed
Like a queen, the azure deep;
How the salvos of her guns
Startled nations from their sleep!

Once among the icebergs grim
Proudly sailed you stranded ship;
Twice among the southern seas
Did she give the foe the slip.

You can hear the wildest tales
All along this beaten shore;
It is said that in her hold
Sleeps her gallant commodore!

Thus our voyage of life may end
Just beyond our natal slips;
On the breakers we may lie,
Side by side—two stranded ships!

The Best of the Bargain.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"I do declare, if it isn't too provoking! Here I have walked myself half to death, up and down, through Stewart's, and Lord & Taylor's, and dear knows where else, and not an inch of scarlet and silver tissue can I find!"

Miss Theodora Leigh leaned back against the cushions of her chocolate-lined coupe with a decidedly vexed expression on her pretty face, and frowned until her low, white forehead was all wrinkled under the fluffy, golden crepe of hair.

Iris May lifted her gray eyes languidly.

"And you really think the world will come to an end if you fail to secure a silver and scarlet tissue for the masquerade at Mrs. Hale's? Suppose you were poor, Theo, as I am, and had only one dress to wear upon all occasions?"

"I believe you are just as happy as I, Iris! At any rate, you haven't to worry about the costume for Zenobia."

"No, I haven't," Iris said, softly; and by the sweet, tranquil look in her earnest gray eyes, you would know her innocent, girlish nature was yet fresh and pure, untarnished by jealousy and envy.

She was a dainty, fragile-looking little lady, with clear, fair complexion, soft and satiny as a white rose-leaf; a face that had very little of frivolity in its expression, although there was nothing unpleasant in the calm, clear gray eyes, the firm, thoughtful mouth, as red as a strawberry.

"Yes, I believe you are actually happier down in your country home, with your flowers and your birds, than I with all the gayety and excitement of New York society. But what do you do with yourself, Iris, all these horridly gloomy winter days?"

A little rush of crimson pride deluged her cheeks.

"I'm sure you would not call it gloomy at dear old Westlawn if you knew our charity scholars, and the sewing class, and my old sick women, and—"

Theo put her lavender-kid hand across the girl's lips.

"Iris! for pity's sake, stop! A longer catalogue would surely set me beside myself. And you actually live and endure it! Thank my presiding planet I am not a country clergyman's daughter!"

Iris' sweet eyes were full of tender, womanly pride.

"I would rather be papa's daughter than any other living man's—poor though we be, Theo! Only, sometimes when I want to buy blankets and warm shawls for my old women, I think how glad I would be to be rich—half as rich as you, Theo!"

"Miss Leigh folded her exquisite hands on her little velvet muff."

"And I suppose when I marry Mr. Chiselhurst I shall be ten times richer, child. You've seen him several times since you've been visiting us; what do you think of him?"

Iris suddenly turned her head to look out the window into the passing crowd, and had any one observed her, they would have wondered, perhaps, at her vividly bright eyes, her flushed, agitated face. When she answered, however, her voice was quiet and placid as ever, and her countenance as it had been always.

"I think Mr. Chiselhurst every way worthy of you, Theodora. I do not see how any woman's life could fail of being happy if spent with him."

Theo laughed—a low, satisfied laugh.

"Exactly my opinion, Iris. Would Harry be spoiled if he knew what we thought of him? By-the-by, Iris, he asked me if you would be at Mrs. Hale's; and that suggests the question—what shall you wear?"

There was a brief little happiness in Iris' eyes. It was because Mr. Chiselhurst had said that.

"I—oh! I had not thought. Possibly that ancient velvet court dress that papa's great-grandmamma wore when she was a girl and was presented to the queen."

Theo's eyes evinced the interest she felt.

"A veritable court-dress! Oh, Iris, I envy you! What is it like?"

Iris smiled at Miss Leigh's impulsiveness.

"It is really the only thing I have to wear, you know," half apologetically. "I believe it is pale blue velvet, *en train*, embroidered with a sort of crystal material."

Theo clasped her hands ecstatically.

"Pale blue! crystal! just my hues exactly! Iris, sell it to me—do, please."

"Sell it! grandmamma's dress! Oh, Theo, how could I? Besides, what will I wear?"

Miss Leigh's sudden offer had conjured so many fleeting visions. The red cedar chest at home, with its carefully preserved relic of grand old times. Her own shabby wardrobe, in which was not one dress suitable to wear to this only dissipation she ever expected to attend; where Harry Chiselhurst would be sure to be—the grave, handsome man who had been so kind to her at the Leigh's; who had asked if she would be at the ball, and whom she thought was so nice.

"Very well," said Theo's voice, breaking coldly upon her random thoughts. "I only thought you were so anxious about your poor old women, and your lack of funds, and so on. And a hundred dollars would go a great ways.

Iris gave a little conscience-stricken gasp of horror. Theo's words had placed every thing in another light; and the thought that she needed prompting by a worldly girl of fashion and no religious profession, and she, her own self, a Christian, vowed to forego the vanities of the world, vowed to self-denial and charity!

She, a poor, plain, country girl; the daughter of an obscure country clergyman, to be thus approached by Theo Leigh!

A moment of painful self-reproach; a moment of girlish regretfulness as her heart would make her acknowledge how happy she would have been had Mr. Chiselhurst—perhaps—asked her to dance; two big crystal tears clearer and brighter than their counterparts on the blue velvet dress—and then, bravery and principle and true womanliness conquered.

"I was very childish, I guess, Theo, to refuse your kind offer for a moment. I will send for the dress at once, and we'll have a nice time fixing it over."

Theo puckered her forehead up in a host of funny little frowns.

"I don't think I quite know you, Iris May. What shall you wear now?"

A little, happy laugh told how thoroughly this true, good girl enjoyed her sacrifice.

"I shall not go at all, now. Really, I shall enjoy myself amazingly in your big, elegant drawing-room all by myself, making my plans for the most economical disbursement of my hundred dollars."

"I think I never saw you look so well before, Theo. Where in the world did you come across that delightfully antiquated toilet? I thought my 'Amy Robsart' would take the palm, but you've excelled that lady. Is my mask straight, Theo?"

It was a gay, girlish voice that addressed Miss Leigh, as the two ladies stood in the bay window of Mrs. Hale's dancing saloon; while near by was a tall, handsomely dressed gentleman in a gorgeous attire, representing Henry VIII.

He had paused, carelessly toying with his jeweled sword, at the sound of Theo Leigh's name.

"So that is Theo! I can indorse the opinion of that young lady. Theo never looked better in her life. But I wonder where little Miss May is?"

Mr. Chiselhurst looked sharply through the eyelashes of his black satin mask, and his face wore a remarkably dissatisfied expression.

"Your mask is straight, Nell—is mine? Yes; isn't my costume elegant? and I came across it so oddly, too. Don't ever say a word, but I bought it of Iris May. It was a family curiosity, you know, and she was going to wear it herself."

Henry VIII listened eagerly, and his eyes brightened to think how fair the little gray-eyed girl would have looked in the dainty blue attire.

"Then how in the world did you come to buy it?"

Chiselhurst heard Theo's low, musical laugh.

"Well—I wanted it, you see, and Iris preferred to have a hundred dollars for her driving old woman down at Westlawn. She's a sanctimonious little thing; but for all that, there is plenty of human nature in her. You ought to have seen her brighten up when I asked her what she thought of my handsome lover!"

"Is Chiselhurst here?" Nell asked, eagerly.

"Are you engaged yet, or—"

The two walked slowly off, and Henry VIII watched them away.

A graceful, girlish figure nestling in a capacious arm-chair in front of the cheery grate, and a pair of gray eyes peering out from under heavy black lashes.

A restful, gracious sight, that made Mr. Chiselhurst's heart thrill, as, fresh from the heat and glare of the ball-room he stood, silently waiting for Iris to learn of his presence.

But she did not move, or turn; directly a sigh, low, weary, came to his ears, and he stepped to her side.

"Don't be alarmed, Miss Iris; it is only I—come from the masquerade because there was no one there. Have I startled you?"

Her glowing cheeks and happy eyes might have answered him.

"Oh, no! but is there no one there, yet? Theo went an hour ago."

He doffed his graceful velvet, feathered toque, and sat down on a hassock at her feet—like some Fairy Prince in his gorgeous attire, with his handsome, interesting face, Iris' heart was throbbing at sight of him—it was so strange, so sweet, so like an enchanted dream to be there alone with him.

"I mean there is no one there for me, Iris. The only one I want and came to plead for is here, right beside me. May I take her, Iris? Will she not confess that she loves me as madly as I do her?"

And, although happy little Iris insists it is the story of King Cophetua over again, Harry assures her that her sweet, sacrificing spirit makes him all unworthy of such a treasure as she is, while Theo Leigh wishes she had never heard of the old blue dress—although there is no doubt but that the inevitable end was only hastened, and not caused by Iris' noble self-denial.

Erminie:

THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AW-
FUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

PET BEGINS HER EDUCATION.
"A horrid specter rises to my sight."
"I hear knocking in the south entry."
Hark! more knocking!—MACBETH.

Throwing open the folding doors, Mrs. Moodie passed into the school-room, closely followed by Pet.

It was a long, high, wide room, with desks running round the walls, and maps, globes, books and slates scattered profusely around. Before each desk was a chair, and some sixty girls of all sizes and sorts sat now busily conning their lessons.

Two or three teachers sat in various directions, round the room, before little tables, with their eyes fixed on the students, ready to note down the slightest infringement of the rules.

It was seldom the commander-in-chief of the establishment swept her silken frounces through the hot, dusty *class*; and now, according to the long-established rule, teachers and pupils rose simultaneously, and courtesied profoundly to that august lady. Then every eye in sixty-three heads turned and fixed themselves

upon the new pupil with that sharp, searching, unflinching stare that only school-girls understand. Petronilla, however, was not in the remotest degree troubled with that disagreeable falling, yelpish bashfulness; and glancing round composedly, she swept the whole room at a glance, and returned every stare with composure and interest.

"Young ladies," said Mrs. Moodie, with a graceful wave of her hand toward Pet, "this young lady is Miss Petronilla Lawless, of Judestown, and will be your future companion and fellow-pupil. I hope you will be mutually pleased with each other, and try to make her at home among you as soon as possible. Miss Sharp, she will enter your division."

And, with a stately bow of her beribboned head, Mrs. Moodie rustled loudly from the room, while teachers and pupils again bowed in deepest reverence.

Pet gave an assenting nod to Mrs. Moodie's remarks, which had the effect of making two or three of the young ladies indulge in a little giggle behind their handkerchiefs. Then, from a distant corner, came a small, keen, wiry-looking human ferrier, known by the appropriate cognomen of Miss Sharpe, who immediately laid hands upon Pet, saying:

"Miss Lawless, come this way. You are to enter my class."

Pet, as good a physiognomist as ever lived, raised her keen eyes to the cantankerous face of the cross-looking old young lady, and conceived, upon the spot, a most intense dislike to her. The other girls, at a silent motion from their teachers, had dropped into their seats, and resumed their studies—still, however, covertly watching the new pupil with all a school-girl's curiosity.

Pet was led by sharp Miss Sharpe to the remote corner from whence she had issued, and where sat some dozen or two "juvenile ladies," all smaller than Pet. Miss Lawless looked at them a moment in undisguised contempt, and then stopped short, jerked herself free from Miss Sharpe's grasp, and coming to a sudden stand-still, decidedly began:

"I ain't a-going to sit among them there little things. I want to go over there!"

And she pointed to where a number of young ladies, whose ages might have varied from seventeen to twenty, sat in the "First Division."

A very little thing will produce a laugh in a silent school-room, where the pupils are ever ready to laugh at anything a new scholar does or says; and the effect of this brief speech was a universal burst of subdued laughter from the sixty "young ladies" aforesaid.

"Well, you can't go there!" said Miss Sharpe, sharply, looking daggers at Pet. "You are to sit in my division—which is the lowest!"

"Yes, I see it is," said Pet; "but you needn't get so cross about it. I should think, when my papa pays for me, I could sit wherever I like. I'm sure this hot old room, without even a carpet on the floor, ain't much of a place to sit in, anyway."

Another universal laugh, louder than the first, followed this; and the sixty pairs of eyes flashed with wicked delight—for Miss Sharpe was the detestation of the school.

"Silence!" called the head monitor, sternly.

Miss Sharpe clutched Pet's shoulder with no gentle hand, and jerked her into a seat with an angry scowl.

"You must keep silence, Miss Lawless," she began, with asperity. "Young ladies are not allowed to talk in the class-room. You will have to sit where ever you are placed, and make no complaints. Such rude behavior is not allowed here. Hold your tongue, now, and read this."

Hereupon she took from her table the "First Book of Lessons," and put it into Pet's hand, with another scowl, darker, if possible, than the first.

Pet took it, and holding it upside down for a while, seemed to be intently studying, thinking all the while that life in a school-room was not only as pleasant, but considerably pleasanter, than she had anticipated.

But for Pet Lawless to keep silent any length of time was simply a moral impossibility; so, finding the cross teacher's lynx eyes turned for a moment the other way, she bent over toward her next neighbor, a little red-eyed, red-haired girl, about her own age, and whispered, in strict confidence, pointing to Miss Sharpe:

"Ain't she a horrid cross old thing?"

But the young lady only glanced askance at the audacious little law-breaker at her side, and edged nervously away from her.

Petronilla, not being easily affronted or slighted, however, came close to little red-head, and holding her book to her mouth, whispered again:

"Does she ever whip you, or anything? She looks cross enough to do it. Ain't it awful, coming to school?"

Seeing there was no escape from her persecutor, red-head thrust her knuckles into her eyes and began to cry.

"What's the matter now?" said the teacher, turning sharply round, and looking threateningly at Pet.

"Why, Miss Sharpe, she keeps a-talking to me all the time, and won't stop," whispered this confident, pointing to Miss Sharpe.

"What is she saying?" said Miss Sharpe, in a quick, irritated voice, that strongly reminded Pet of Dismal Hollow and Miss Priscilla Toospegs.

"She—she—she says you're a—a horrid cross old thing, please, ma'am!" wept the little one, digging her knuckles still further into her eyes.

Miss Sharpe's face grew black as a thunder-cloud—owing to her peculiar complexion, she generally blushed black, or deep orange. In all her thirteen years' teaching, she had never encountered a pupil who had dared to call her a "horrid cross old thing" before. Old—that was the worst. To be called so before the whole school, too! Miss Sharpe sat for one awful moment perfectly speechless with rage, and so black in the face that there seemed on the spot.

Once again a loud laugh, that would not be restrained, came from the sixty pretty mouths of the sixty young ladies so often spoken of. Even the teachers, although they sternly called "silence!" were forced to cough violently, to hide the smile that was creeping over their faces at Miss Sharpe's rage.

Meantime, our dauntless Pet sat with a sort of head-up-and-heels-down look, that was a sight to see; her arms akimbo, and her bright black eyes blazing with defiance, daringly riveted on the face of the justly-offended teacher.

"Did—did you dare to say that, you—you impudent, impertinent—young saucy—"

Abandoned, outrageous son of a gun!" put in Pet, composedly.

"Silence! Did you dare to call me that—that name?"

"I didn't call you any name—I said you were a horrid cross old thing; and I'll leave it to everybody here if you ain't! I ain't used to hold my tongue—and I'm not going to do it, either!" said Pet, all ablaze with defiance.

Miss Sharpe sat, unable to speak, her rage almost swamped in her utter amazement. In all her experience she had never come across so desperate and utterly depraved a case as this. Every book was dropped, and every eye fixed on Pet. Even the other teachers, unable longer to repress their smiles, exchanged glances of surprise, and watched with interest and curiosity, the little original, who sat staring at Miss Sharpe as if for a wager.

"I—I won't endure this! I am not to be insulted in this manner!" said Miss Sharpe, rising passionately. "I'll go and report her to Mrs. Moodie; and either she or I must leave this class."

"My dear Miss Sharpe, be calm," said the head teacher, a pleasant-faced young girl, as she rose and came over. "There is no use in troubling Mrs. Moodie about the matter. This little girl, you perceive, has been indulged and spoiled all her life, and cannot readily submit to authority now. My dear," she added, turning to Pet, "you must sit still and not talk. It is against the rules; and you perceive you are giving Miss Sharpe a great deal of trouble."

"Well, so is she, just as bad! She's giving me a great deal of trouble, too! I want to go and sit in your class."

"But you can't sit in my class, Miss Lawless. You must keep the place allotted you. Little girls should be docile and obedient, you know, and do as they are told. Will you sit still now, and be quiet?"

"Yes; if she lets me alone!" pointing to Miss Sharpe.

"You must do as your teacher says, child. Now, do be a good little girl, and don't talk. And the sweet-voiced young lady patted Pet's black curly head kindly, and went back to her place.

Miss Sharpe, looking as if she would like to pounce upon Pet, and pound the life out of her, relapsed scowling into her seat; and Pet, curling her lip contemptuously at the cross teacher, took a lead pencil out of her pocket, and began amusing herself drawing caricatures of her all over the book she held in her hand.

A profound silence again fell on the hot, close *class*, and the girls bent over to-morrow's tasks; now and then, however, smiling slyly at each other, and glancing significantly at the new-comer, whose short half-hour in school had already created a sensation quite unparalleled in all the past history of the establishment, and which was destined to fill sixty letters home to "papa and mamma" next time they wrote. Then, in half an hour more, a bell loudly rung, and every girl jumped eagerly up. This was the signal that school for the day was dismissed, and books, slates and pencils were hustled hastily out of sight; and two by two the girls marched through the now open folding doors, beginning with the tallest, through the long hall down the staircase, through another hall out of a side-room, and into an immense play-ground, furnished with swings, skipping-ropes, hoops, and everything else necessary for recreation and amusement.

But no longer were hoops, and swings, and skipping-ropes seized with loud shouts as heretofore; newer and more attractive game was in view now, and every one crowded around our Pet, surveying her with open eyes, as if she were some natural curiosity.

But Pet had no intention of standing there to be looked at and cross-questioned; and breaking through the ring with the yell of an Ojibwa Indian, she sprang into one of the swings, and invited "some of 'em to come and swing her."

Like hops in beer, Pet's presence seemed to throw the whole assembly into a ferment hitherto unknown. The swings flew wildly; the skipping-ropes went up and down with lightning-like velocity; the hoops whirled and flew over the ground in a way that must have astonished even themselves, if hoops ever can be astonished. The girls raced, and ran, and skipped, and laughed as they had never done before; and the noise and uproar waxed "fast and furious." And wherever the fun was highest, the laughter loudest, the excitement wildest, there you might find Pet, the center and origin of it all. Cross Miss Sharpe, who had been sent out to look after them, and see that none of them broke their necks, if possible, wrung her hands in despair at the awful din, and rushed hither and thither, scolding, shaking, threatening, and vociferating at the top of her lungs; but all in vain. They were every one going crazy—that was evident; and that little mix, who had come there that day to throw the whole school in convulsions, was the cause of it all.

But even school-girls, with lungs, and throats, and faces very often of brass, must get exhausted at last; and after an hour's steady screaming and yelling, the whole assemblage shrieked, laughed, and shouted themselves into hoarseness and comparative quiet.

Pet, somewhat fatigued after her exertions, was seated in the midst of a group of girls, telling, in solemn tones, a most awful "raw-head and bloody bones" ghost-story, which she "made up" as she went along, and which was destined to deprive at least twenty little individuals of a wink of sleep that night.

Every one was bending eagerly forward, listening breathlessly to Pet, who had just got "Jack into the haunted castle," and was announcing the coming of a great big black man, with red-hot coals for eyes, and flames of fire coming out of his mouth, when a thin, sharp shadow fell over them, and, looking up with a terrified start, they beheld Miss Sharpe standing over them.

"What is she talking about now?" queried that lady, with no very amiable glances toward Pet.

"She's telling a ghost story; that's what she's talking about," said Pet, instantly beginning to be provoking.

"Ghosts!" said Miss Sharpe, turning up her nose, though nature had already saved her the trouble. "Such stuff! You must not terrify the children by telling them such things, little girl."

"It's not stuff!" said Pet; "it's as true as preaching. I've seen lots of ghosts myself. There, now!"

"Miss Lawless, do you know where little girls that tell fibs go to?" said Miss Sharpe, sternly.

"Yes, the same place you'll go to, I expect," said Pet, pertly; "but I ain't telling fibs—I never do. And I have seen plenty of ghosts, too. There's a whole settlement of them out where we live. I only wish I had brought some of them to school with me, and then you would see. That's all!"

"You naughty little girl!" said Miss Sharpe, angrily. "How dare you tell me such a story? You have seen ghosts, indeed! Why, everybody knows there is no such thing."

"What do you bet there's not?" said Pet.

"Miss Lawless, you forget to whom you are speaking!" said Miss Sharpe, with dignity.

"No, I don't; I know very well to whom I am speaking," said Pet, imitating her tone; and I know, just as well there are ghosts. They're great, tall, thin people, in white, with hollow eyes, that come at midnight and scare

people. I've seen them, and I guess I ought to know."

Miss Sharpe, disdaining an altercation with the elf, who was already bristling up in anticipation of a controversy, turned and walked away majestically, or, at least, as majestically as her four feet eight inches would allow.

Pet looked after her with a boding eye that told wonderful tales, if she could only have read it; but she contented herself with mentally exclaiming:

"Oh, I'll dose you! Maybe you won't see a ghost to-night, old Miss Vinegar."

"There, now, go on with the story," chorused half a dozen voices, when Miss Sharpe was gone.

"See here," said Pet, without heeding the request, "where does she—Miss Sharpe I mean—sleep at night?"

"With us," said one of the small girls, "in the children's dormitory. The large girls have rooms to themselves, every two of them; but we sleep in a long room all full of beds, and Miss Sharpe sleeps there, too."

"Hum-m-m! Do you know where I am to sleep?"

"Yes; all Miss Sharpe's division sleep in the children's dormitory. You'll be there."

"Um-m-m! I should like to see the place. Would we be let?"

"Oh, yes. If you can get one of the girls in the First Division to go with you, she can take you all over the house."

Off ran Pet, and without much difficulty she persuaded one of the First Division girls to show her through the house.

The first place they visited was the children's dormitory. This was a long room, with rows of white-curtained beds on either side for the children, and one larger than the rest, at the further end, for Miss Sharpe. Small washstands and mirrors were scattered around, and near each bed was placed a small trunk belonging to the children.

Pet scanned these arrangements with a thoughtful eye. Then, turning to her companion, she said:

"In which of the beds am I to sleep?"

"In this one," said the girl, indicating one at the extreme end of the room, opposite Miss Sharpe's. The room was full; so they had to put it close to the window, and you will have a chance to see everybody that passes."

Pet went over to examine. Within a few inches of the bed was a window overlooking the street. It was partly raised now, and Pet thrust her head out to "see what she could see," as they say. The first thing that struck her was the fact that the window was in a straight line above the hall door, and only removed from it the distance of a foot or two. Instantly a demoniacal project of mischief flashed across her fertile brain; and as she withdrew her head her wicked eyes, under their long, drooping lashes, were fairly scintillating with the anticipation of coming fun.

"Do they use bells or knockers on their doors, around here?" she carelessly asked, as she flitted about.

"Some use one, some the other. There is a large brass-knocker on this door. I am sure you must have seen it."

"I had forgotten. This is my trunk, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"What time do they go to bed here?"

"Nine in summer—eight in winter."

"Hum-m-m! I know now. And do they stay out in that yard all the time?"

"Oh, no. As soon as it gets dusk we come in, have supper, and then the larger girls practice their music, or read, or write to their friends, or study, or sew, or do whatever they like; and the little girls of your division play about the halls and passages."

"Um-m-m! I see," said Pet, in the same musing tone, while her wicked eyes, under their long, dark lashes, were twinkling with the very spirit of mischief. "Could you get me a good long cord, do you think? I want it for something."

"Yes, I think so. Do you want it now?"

"Yes, please."

"Very well; wait here till I go up to my room and get it for you," said the unsuspecting young lady.

"Oh, ching-a-ring-a-ring-chaw!" shouted Pet, dancing round the long room with irrepressible glee, when she found herself alone.

"Oh, won't I have fun to-night! Won't I show them what spiritual rapping is! Won't there be weeping and gnashing of teeth before morning!"

"Mrs. MacShuttle,
She lived in a scuttie,
Along with her dog and her cat."

sung the imp, seizing a huge pitcher from one of the washstands, and flourishing it over her head as she sung. Round and round she whirled, until her pitcher came furiously against the wall, and smash! in a thousand fragments it fell on the floor.

Arrested in her dance, fiery stood still one moment, in dismay. Here was a winding-up of her extempore waltz quite unlooked for. There on the floor lay the pitcher, shivered into atoms, and there stood Pet, holding the handle still, and glancing utterly agast from the ruins on the floor to the fragment of crockery in her hand.

"Whew! here's a go!" was the elegant expression first jerked out of Pet by the exigency of the case. I expect this pitcher's been in the establishment ever since it was an establishment, and would have been in it as much longer only for me. Pet, child, look out! There'll be murder, distraction, and a tearing off of our shirts! Fall of Jerusalem! won't Miss Sharpe give me a blowing up, though!"

"Oh, Miss Lawless! what have you done?" cried the young lady, in tones of consternation, as she suddenly entered.

"Smashed the crockery," said Pet, coolly pointing to the wreck.

"Oh, dear me! Oh, Miss Lawless! how could you do so?"

"Didn't go for to do it. Got smashed itself."

"Miss Sharpe will be very angry, Miss Lawless."

"Well, that don't worry me much," said Pet. "I am afraid she will blame me. I should not have left you here alone," said the young lady, twisting her fingers in distress.

"No, she won't. I'll send out and buy another one."

"Oh, you can't. The servants are not allowed to run errands for the young ladies without permission from Mrs. Moodie. You will have to tell Miss Sharpe."

"Well, come along then; I'll tell her. Did you bring the string?"

"Yes, here it is. Oh, Miss Lawless! I am exceedingly sorry."

"Well—my goodness! you needn't be. An old blue pitcher! I used to throw half a dozen of them, every day, at the servants, at home, and nobody ever made a fuss about it. A common old blue pitcher—humph!"

"Oh! but it was different at home. They were your own, there; and Miss Sharpe is so—queer. She will scold you dreadfully."

"Well, so will I, then—there! I can scold

as long and as loud as she can, I reckon. An old blue pitcher! Humph! Wish to gracious I had smashed the whole set, and made one job of it."

By this time they had reached the playground, and making her way through the crowd, Pet marched resolutely up to Miss Sharpe, and confronted that lady with an expression as severe as though she were about to have her arrested for high treason.

"Miss Sharpe, look here!" she began. "I've been up-stairs and smashed an old blue pitcher. There!"

"What?" said Miss Sharpe, knitting her brows, and rather at a loss.

"Miss Lawless was in the children's dormitory, Miss Sharpe," explained the girl who had been Pet's guide, "and she accidentally broke one of the pitchers. She could not help it, I assure you."

"But I know she could help it," screamed Miss Sharpe. "She has done it on purpose, just to provoke me. Oh, you little limb you!—you unbearable little mischief-maker! You deserve to be whipped till you can't stand."

"See here, Miss Sharpe; you'll be hoarse pretty soon, if you keep screaming that way," said Pet, calmly.

"I'll go and tell Mrs. Moodie. I'll go this minute. Such conduct as this, you'll see, will not be tolerated here," shrieked the exasperated lady, shaking her fist furiously at Pet.

"Mrs. Moodie has gone out," said one of the girls.

"Then I'll tell her to-morrow. I'll—"

Here the loud ringing of a bell put a stop to further declamation, and the girls all flew, flocking in, and marched, two by two, into another large room, where a long supper-table was laid out.

It was almost dark when the evening meal was over. Then the larger girls dispersed themselves to their various avocations, and the younger ones, under the care of a gentler monitor than Miss Sharpe, raced about the long halls and passages, and up and down-stairs.

Now was the time Pet had been waiting for. Gliding, unobserved, up-stairs, she entered the dormitory, and securing one end of the string to the bed-post, let the remainder drop out of the window. Then returning down-stairs, she passed unnoticed through the front hall, and finally secured the other end of the string to the knocker of the door. It was too dark, as she knew, for any one to observe the cord in opening the door.

This done, she returned to her companions, all aglow with delight at her success so far; and instigated by her, the din and uproar soon grew perfectly unbearable, and the whole phalanx were ordered off to bed half an hour earlier than usual, to get rid of the noise.

As Judge Lawless had said, it was a rigidly strict establishment; and the rule was that, at half-past nine, every light should be extinguished, and all should be safely tucked up in bed. Even Mrs. Sharpe herself was no exception to this rule; for, either thinking example better than precept, or being fond of sleeping, ten o'clock always found her in the arms of Morpheus.

Therefore, at ten o'clock, silence, and darkness, and slumber, hung over the establishment of Mrs. Moodie. In the children's dormitory, nestled in their white-draped beds, the little tired pupils were sleeping the calm, quiet sleep of childhood, undisturbed by feverish thoughts or gloomy forebodings of the morrow. Even Miss Sharpe had testily permitted herself to fall stiffly asleep, and lay with her mouth open, stretched out as straight as a ramrod, and about as grim. All were asleep—all but one.

One wicked, curly, mischief-brewing little head there was by far too full of naughty thoughts to sleep. Pet, nestled on her pillow, was actually quivering with suppressed delight at the coming fun.

She heard ten o'clock—eleven strike, and then she got up in bed and commenced operations. Her first care was to steal softly to one of the washstands, and thoroughly wet a sponge, which she placed on the window-ledge within her reach, knowing she would soon have occasion to use it.

Taking some phosphorated ether, which she had procured for the purpose of "fun" before leaving home, she rubbed it carefully over her face and hands.

Reader, did you ever see any one in the dark with their faces and hands rubbed over with phosphorated ether? Looking as though they were all on fire—all encircled by flames? If you have, then you know how our Pet looked then.

Sitting there, a frightful object to contemplate, she waited impatiently for the hour of midnight to come.

The clock struck twelve, at last; the silence was so profound that the low, soft breathing of the young sleepers around her could be plainly heard. In her long, flowing night-wrapper, Pet got up and tiptoed softly across the room to the bed where the cross she-dragon lay.

Now, our Pet never thought there could be the slightest danger in what she was about to do, or, wild as she was, she would most assuredly not have done it. She merely wished to frighten Miss Sharpe for her obstinacy, unbelief in ghosts and crossness, and never gave the matter another thought. Therefore, though it was altogether an inexcusable trick, still Pet was not so very much to blame as may at first appear.

Now she paused for a moment to contemplate the sour, grim-looking sleeper—thinking her even more repulsive in sleep than when awake; and then laying one hand on her face, she uttered a low, hollow groan, destined for her ears alone.

Miss Sharpe, awakened from a deep sleep by the disagreeable and startling consciousness of an icy-cold hand on her face, started up in affright, and then she beheld an awful vision! A white specter by her bedside, all in fire, with flames encircling face and hands, and sparks of fire seemingly darting from eyes and mouth!

For one terrible moment she was unable to utter a sound for utter, unspeakable horror. Then, with one wild, piercing shriek, she buried her head under the clothes, to shut out the awful specter. Such a shriek as it was! No hyena, no screech-owl, no peacock ever uttered so ear-splitting, throat-rending a scream as that. No word or words in the whole English language can give the faintest idea of that terrible scream. Before its last vibration had died away on the air, every sleeper in the establishment, including madame herself, had sprung out of bed, and stood pale and trembling, listening for a repetition of that awful cry. From twenty beds in the dormitory, twenty little sleepers sprung, and immediately began to make night hideous with small editions of Miss Sharpe's shriek. Gathering strength from numbers, the twenty voices rose an octave higher at every scream, and yell after yell, in the shrillest soprano, pierced the air, although not one of them had the remotest idea of what it was all about.

At the first alarm, Firefly had flitted swiftly and fleetly across the room, jumped into bed, and, seizing the sponge, gave her face and hands a vigorous rubbing; and now stood screaming with the rest, not to say considerably louder than any of them.

"Oh, Miss Sharpe! get up! the house is afire! we're all murdered in our beds!" yelled Pet, removing her head from under the covers, and going over and catching that lady by the shoulder with a vigorous shake.

"Oh, Miss Sharpe! Oh, Miss Sharpe! Get up. Oh-oh-oh!" shrieked the terrified children, clustering round the bed, and those who could springing in and shaking her.

With a disagreeable sense of being half crushed to death, Miss Sharpe was induced to remove her head from under the covers, and cast a quick, terrified glance around. But the coast was clear—the awful specter was gone.

And now another noise met her ears—the coming footsteps of every one within the walls of the establishment, from Mrs. Moodie down to the little maid-of-all-work in the kitchen. In they rushed, armed with bedroom-candlesticks, rulers, ink-bottles, slate-frames, and various other warlike weapons, prepared to do battle to the last gasp.

And then it was: "Oh, what on earth is the matter? What on earth is the matter? What is the matter?" from every lip.

Miss Sharpe sprang out of bed and fled in terror to the side of Mrs. Moodie.

"Oh, Mrs. Moodie, it was awful! Oh, it was dreadful! With flames of fire coming out of its mouth, and all dressed in white. Oh, it was terrible! Ten feet high, and all in flames!" shrieked Miss Sharpe, like one demented.

"Miss Sharpe, what in the name of Heaven is all this about?" asked the startled Mrs. Moodie, while the sixty "young ladies" clung together, white with mortal fear.

"Oh, Mrs. Moodie, I've seen it! It was frightful! All in flames of fire!" screamed the terrified Miss Sharpe.

"Seen it? Seen what? Explain yourself, Miss Sharpe!"

"Oh, it was a ghost! a spirit! a demon! a fiend! I felt its blazing hands cold as ice on my face. Oh, good Heaven!" And again Miss Sharpe's shriek at the recollection resounded through the room.

"Blazing hands cold as ice! Miss Sharpe, you are crazy! Calm yourself, I command you, and explain why we are all roused out of our beds at this hour of the night by your shrieks," said Mrs. Moodie, fixing her sharp eyes steadily upon her.

That look of rising anger brought Miss Sharpe to her senses. Wringing her hands, she cried out:

"Oh, I saw a ghost, Mrs. Moodie; an awful ghost! It came to my bedside all on fire, and—"

"A ghost! nonsense, Miss Sharpe!" broke out the now thoroughly enraged Mrs. Moodie, as she caught Miss Sharpe by the shoulder, and shook her soundly. "You have been dreaming; you have had the nightmare; you are crazy! A pretty thing, indeed! that the whole house is to be aroused and terrified in this way. I am ashamed of you, Miss Sharpe, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself to terrify those little children committed to your charge in this manner. I never heard of anything so abominable in my life before," said the angry Mrs. Moodie.

"Oh, indeed, indeed I saw it! Oh, indeed, indeed I did!" protested Miss Sharpe, wringing her hands.

"Silence, Miss Sharpe! don't make a fool of yourself! I'm surprised at you! a woman of your years giving way to such silly fancies. You saw it, indeed! A nice teacher you are to watch young children! Return to your beds, young ladies; and do you, Miss Sharpe, return to yours; and don't let me ever hear anything more about ghosts, or I shall instantly dismiss you. Ghosts, indeed! you're a downright fool, Miss Sharpe—that's what you are!" exclaimed the exasperated lady.

But even the threat of dismissal could not totally overcome Miss Sharpe's fears now, and catching hold of Mrs. Moodie's night-robe as she was turning away, she wildly exclaimed:

"Oh, Mrs. Moodie, let us have a light in the room for this night at least! I cannot sleep a wink unless you do."

"Miss Sharpe, hold your tongue! Do you see how you have frightened these children! Go to bed and mind your business. Young ladies, I think I told you before to go to your rooms—did I not?" said Mrs. Moodie, with still increasing anger.

Trembling and terrified, the girls scampered like frightened doves back to their nests; and Mrs. Moodie, outraged and indignant, tramped her way to the bed she had so lately vacated, inwardly vowing to discharge Miss Sharpe as soon as ever she could get another to take her place.

And then the children in the dormitory crept shivering into bed, and wrapped their heads up in the bedclothes, trembling at every sound. And Miss Sharpe, quivering in dread, shrunk into the smallest possible space in her room, and having twisted herself into a round ball and having quitted tightly shut her eyes, and firmly resolved that nothing in the earth, or in the waters under the earth, should make her open those eyes again that night. And our wicked Firefly, chuckling inwardly over the success of her plot, jumped into hers, thinking of the fun yet to come.

An hour passed. One o'clock struck; then two, before sleep began to visit the drowsy eyelids of the roused slumberers again. Having assured herself that they had really fallen asleep at last, Pet sat up in bed softly, opened the window an inch or two, screened from view—had any one been watching her, which there was not—by the white curtains of the bed.

Then, lying composedly back on her pillow, she took hold of her string, and began pulling away.

Knock! knock! knock! knock! Rap! rap! rap! rap! rap! rap!

The clamor was deafening; the music was awful at that silent hour of the night. Up and down the huge brass knocker thundered, waking a peal of echoes that rung and rung through the house.

Once again the house was aroused; once again every sleeper sprung out of bed, in terror, wonder, and consternation.

"Oh, holy saints! what is that? Oh, good heavens! what can that be at this time?" came simultaneously from every lip.

Knock! knock! knock! Rap! rap! rap! louder and louder still.

Every girl flitted from her room, and a universal rush was made for the apartments of Mrs. Moodie—all but the inmates of the dormitory. Miss Sharpe was too terrified to stir, and the children, following her lead, contented themselves with lying still, and renewing their screams where they had left them off an hour or so before.

Now Mrs. Moodie, half-distracted, rushed out, and encountered her forty terrified pupils in the hall.

"Oh, Mrs. Moodie! what has happened to-night? We will all be killed! Oh, listen to that!"

Knock! knock! knock! knock! knock! The clamor was deafening.

"We had better open the door, or they will break it down!" said Mrs. Moodie, her teeth chattering with terror.

"Send for Bridget; she is afraid of nothing," suggested one of the trembling girls.

Two or three of the most courageous made a rush for the kitchen; and Bridget—a strapping nymph of five feet nine, and "stout according"—was routed out of bed, to storm the breach.

"Faith, thin, I'll open the door, if it was the devil himself!" exclaimed Bridget, resolutely, as she grasped the poker, and, like the leader of a forlorn hope, turned the key in the door.

Back she swung it with a jerk. The knocking instantly ceased. Up flew the poker, and down it descended with a whack, upon—vacancy! There was no one there!

"The Lord be between us an' harm!" exclaimed Bridget, recoiling back. "The devil a one's there, good, bad, or indifferent!"

"They must have run away when you opened the door!" said Mrs. Moodie, in trembling tones. "There is certainly some one there!"

Bridget descended the steps, and looked up and down the street; but all was silent, lonely, and deserted—not a living creature was to be seen.

"Come in, and lock the door," said the appalled Mrs. Moodie. "What in the name of Heaven could it have been?"

"Oh, the house is haunted!—the house is haunted!" came from the white lips of the young ladies. "Oh, Mrs. Moodie! do not ask us to go back to our rooms. We dare not. Let us stay with you until morning!"

"Very well," said Mrs. Moodie, not sorry to have company; "come into my room. Bridget, bring lights."

The door was unlocked. The frightened girls hustled, pale, and frightened, and shivering with superstition, awe, and undefined apprehension, into Mrs. Moodie's room; while that lady herself, crouching in their midst, was scarcely less terrified than they. Bridget brought in lights; and their coming renewed the courage the darkness had totally quenched.

"Now, Mistress Moodie, ma'am," said Bridget, crossing her arms with grim determination, "I'm goin' to sit at that door till mornin', if it's plazin to ye, and if thim blackguards spalpeens comes knockin' dacent people out av their beds ag'in, be thim an' that, I'll lave the mark of my five fingers on thim, as sure as my name's Biddy Malone!"

"Oh, indeed, indeed I saw it! Oh, indeed, indeed I did!" protested Miss Sharpe, wringing her hands.

"It may be some wickedly-disposed person wishing to frighten the young ladies; and if it is, the heaviest penalties of the law shall be inflicted on them."

Arming herself with the poker, Bridget softly turned the key in the door, and laid her hand on the lock, ready to open it at a second's notice.

Scarcely had she taken her stand, when knock! knock! it began again; but the third rap was abruptly cut short by her violently jerking the door open, and lifting the poker for a blow that would have done honor to Donnybrook Fair. But a second time it fell, with a loud crack, upon—nothing! Far or near, not a soul was to be seen. Bridget was dismayed.

For the first time in her life, a sensation of terror filled her brave Irish heart. Slamming the door violently to, she locked it again, and rushed, with open eyes and mouth, into the room where the terror-stricken maids and pupils sat, mute with fear.

"Faith, it's the devil himself that's at it! Lord pardon me for namin' him! Oh, holy martyrs! look down on us this night for a poor, disconsolate set of orayners, and the Cross of Christ be between us and all harm!" And dropping a little bob of a courtesy, Bridget devoutly cut the sign of the cross on her forehead with her thumb.

Unable to speak, or move with terror, mistress, pupils, and all servants crouched together, longing and praying wildly for morning to come.

Again the knocking commenced, and continued, without intermission, for one whole mortal hour. Even the neighbors began to be alarmed at the unusual din, and windows were opened, and night-capped heads thrust out to see who it was who knocked so incessantly. Three o'clock struck, and then, Pet beginning to feel terribly sleepy, and quite satisfied with the fun she had had all night, cut the cord, and drew it up. The clamors, of course, instantly ceased; and five minutes after, Firefly, the wicked cause of all this trouble, was peacefully sleeping.

But no other eye in the house was destined to close that night—or rather, morning. Huddled together below, the frightened flock waited for the first glimpse of morning sunlight, thinking all the while that never was there a night so long as that. Up in the children's dormitory, all—from Miss Sharpe downward—lay in a cold perspiration of dread, trembling to stay where they were, yet, not daring to get up and join their companions below.

"I'll never stay another night in this dreadful place if I only live to see morning!" was the inward exclamation of every teacher and pupil who could by any means leave.

And so, in sleepless watchfulness, the dark, silent hours of morning wore on; and the first bright ray of another day's sunlight streaming in through the windows, never beheld an assemblage of paler or more terrified faces than were gathered together in the establishment of Mrs. Moodie.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 290.)

Nick Whiffles' Pet:

NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

CHAPTER XIII.

A JUVENILE WOOING.

THE next morning after the meeting of Miona and Ned Hazel, the lad went early to the trap that had been visited by her. He found a squealing beaver in it, but there was no kind hand near to set it free. He let it cry for a while in the hope of drawing his visitor to the spot.

But, although he waited some time, she came not, and he was compelled to kill and carry it home. The same thing took place on the second morning, but the third saw his ardent wishes gratified.

There was no beaver in his trap, and he stood feeling as grieved and disappointed as a young gentleman could well feel whose dearest hopes had been blasted, and who was ready to lie down and die in despair.

While in this miserable mood, he raised his eyes and saw two persons standing before him. One was the Phantom Princess, and the other was Miona, her daughter. They were standing side by side, neither dressed in white, but both in the brilliantly colored dress of the Blackfoot squaws who stood high in the graces of their warrior husbands.

Ned blushed, and saluted them with natural gallantry. Myra said:

"I am looking for Nick Whiffles; is he at home?"

"He was there an hour ago, when I left; he is cleaning up his gun, so if you want to see him, you will find him there. I will show you the way."

"No; I do not wish you to do it," said she, interposing. "I know the way there myself. I only wanted to make certain of finding him."

"I am sure he is there; it is all of two miles distant, and you had better let me go with you," said Ned, who did not like the idea of losing the companionship of the girl, now that she had been so long coming.

"I would prefer that you should remain here," she said, quite earnestly. "I wish to see him on very particular business, and wish no one else near."

"You don't suppose I would stay near, while you are talking," said the lad, reproachfully.

"No, but I shall leave Miona here until I return, and, as she says you and she are acquainted, I had hopes that you would be willing to remain and keep her company."

"Oh! I'll do that!" exclaimed Ned, his face glowing with delight. "I have my gun with me, and I will take the best of care of her."

"Don't be gone too long," said the young maiden, as her mother started to move away.

"I will be back by noon, she replied, as she kissed her good-bye, and speedily vanished in the forest.

"I only wish it was night," thought Ned, as he realized that he was alone with the one of whom he had been dreaming day and night, ever since he had first met her.

But he felt certain of several hours with her, and a sense of pleasurable delight came over him, as he suspected that Miona was quite willing to spend that time in his company.

Innocent and pure-minded as was Miona, and ignorant too, of the great emotion of love, she was artless and unembarrassed. Ned, despite his backwoods training, was naturally polite, his genuine goodness of heart resembling, in a great measure, the kind nature of Nick Whiffles.

"I am so sorry for mother," said the girl, as the two unconsciously walked away in the direction of the river.

"Why, what's the matter with her?"

"Something dreadful—she would not tell me what—but she has done nothing but cry and pray ever since we started from home. I saw the Indians scowl at her, and several of them seem to be angry about something; but she cries so much that I have been crying, too."

And her pretty eyes filled with tears, while Ned wanted to comfort her, and wasn't exactly certain how it should be done.

"I didn't see that anything much was the matter with her," he said. "She wasn't crying when she went by here."

"Because she has wept so much that she can't. I am glad, Nick Whiffles is at home, for if she had been disappointed in seeing him, I don't know what she would have done."

"If Nick can do anything in the world for her, he'll do it; I know Nick."

"I can't understand how he is to help her," continued Miona, with a look of great perplexity; "for she has a good many friends among the Indians, and she is considered a sort of queen among them. But I think it must have something to do with that white man the Indians have in the Death Lodge."

"Who is he?" asked the astonished Ned.

"Somebody followed us in a canoe, and the Blackfeet caught him, and I suppose they will put him to death, as they have a good many others. She keeps talking about somebody named Hugh; do you know anybody of that name?"

Ned did not, although had she said Bandman, he would have recognized it.

"Well," added Miona, with a sigh, "I suppose she will tell me some day. Here we are at the bank of the river, and yonder is my canoe."

"Let us go look at it."

"You can ride in it if you choose."

The boat, of a natural dusky bark color, lay but a short distance away, and the two made their way to it.

"We have a long time to wait; let us cross over to the other side and explore it," said the girl, stepping lightly into it.

Ned was only too happy to join in the excursion, so he followed her and took up the oar.

"Which way shall we go?" he asked, for getting that she had just given him the direction.

"Across, I said; or, if you wish it, you can go up or down, but we mustn't be away when mother returns."

Ned handled the oar with no little skill, and he sent the light canoe skimming swiftly over the river, which at this particular place was quite broad.

Miona sat in the prow of the boat, as though she was mistress of the situation, her large, lustrous eyes fixed upon Ned Hazel, who, blushing deeply, plied the paddle with all the grace of which he was capable.

Touching the opposite bank, the girl sprang lightly out, and he followed her, pausing only long enough to draw the canoe up out of the way of the current.

The boy carried his rifle with him, as was his invariable custom, and he only wished that some huge bear or other animal would cross their path, that he might show the beautiful prattling maiden at his side how much he was willing to do for her; but no danger appeared, and he could only do his best to keep pace with the wonderful volubility of her tongue.

Meager as was the education of Ned Hazel, he could tell from the conversation of the girl that she had acquired a great deal of knowledge, and he concluded at once that the Phantom Princess must be a personage of wonderful wisdom to have taught such a small girl.

Now and then he stole a side glance at her, and on each occasion he was reminded of that singular, shadowy resemblance, of which we have spoken. It puzzled him greatly, but at last he fathomed the mystery.

It came upon him all at once. She looked like the trapper Bandman, who sat next to him in the canoe. Strange that he had not noticed it before!

"Have you always lived among the Indians?" asked Ned, as he walked slowly and thoughtfully beside the girl.

"Ever since I can remember," she replied; "but you can see I am not an Indian. Why do you ask?"

"I have often wondered, since I saw you the other day, how it was that you and your mother were in this out-of-the-way place."

"So you have been thinking of me?" asked Miona, turning her laughing face toward that of her companion.

"I should think I had," replied Ned, again blushing. "I haven't thought of much else. I asked Nick all about you."

"And what did he tell you?"

"He told me to keep still, and he didn't know anything to tell me."

"I guess he don't know much about me, but he has heard of mother before."

"Yes, but I couldn't get him to tell anything about her. Fact is, he don't seem to like to talk much about her."

"Have you lived in the woods ever since you can remember?" asked Ned, delighted.

"No," was the prompt response. "I was born in some city, and left here by somebody."

"You don't know by whom? How strange that neither of us can tell how it is we came to live here!"

"Do you love this life?"

Miona was silent a few moments before she answered:

"Yes; but sometimes, when mother has told me of the cities and countries that are all over this beautiful world, I feel a longing to go and see them."

"So do I," said Ned, with compressed lips. "I have a kind of faint memory of things very different from these, and I will tell you something about her. Fact is, he don't seem to like to talk much about her."

"Of course I will."

"I don't intend to spend my life here. When I get to be a man—"

"Why, you are nearly a man now!" interrupted the girl, with a laugh.

"Do you think so?" asked Ned, delighted.

"Well, when I get to be a man I'm going to leave this place and see the world."

"I would do so, too, if I were you."

"And, Miona, why won't you go with me?"

"Oh! I can't leave mother," said the startled girl; "what would become of me? But I will try and coax her to go."

Ned took the hand of the girl as they walked back toward the river, and told of his dreams of what he would do when he should reach the state of manhood. She listened attentively for several moments, and then suddenly paused.

"Mother is calling me, and we must hurry back!"

"I should think I had," replied Ned, again blushing. "I haven't

might mean Ed or Ned, and that's why I called him so. What M means, I can't figure. I didn't dare take any name beginning with that letter, for fear I might hit his genuine figure-head, and his owner got on his track. So, he had such a purty pair of hazel eyes, that I called him Ned Hazel. Hello, Calamity, what is it?" he exclaimed, starting up, as though detected in some guilty thing, as his dog bounded into the cabin, with a whine. "Some one coming, eh? I must keep 'em out of here."

Nick was generally self-possessed at the most trying times, but he was greatly embarrassed at this moment. Without placing back in the box the precious articles he had been examining, he let them fall to the ground, and catching up his rifle, hurried to the outside.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, as he encountered the Phantom Princess, almost upon the very threshold, and feeling the obligations of hospitality, he retreated a step or two, and invited her in.

"No," said she, halting where she stood, and seating herself upon the log that he had vacated only a few minutes before; "the day is pleasant, the sun warm, and I will sit here." "Just as you please," said Nick, not a little relieved, as he seated himself beside her, but at a respectful distance; "you know my cabin is at your service, and I'll do any thing in the world for ye."

"I believe it, Nick, and I have come to ask you to do the greatest service one being can do another."

"Out with it, then," said Nick, and Myra Bandman then proceeded, in a deliberate and almost emotionless voice, to relate her story. My reader has already learned it, so that it need not be repeated here.

The hunter listened, without a word or exclamation, until she was through.

"And now," she added, in conclusion. "I will tell you what I want of you. Hugh has been condemned to death, and the only human being who can extricate him from his fate is you."

"You are a sort of princess," replied Nick, leaning upon his rifle, and looking down to the ground in his gravest manner; "haven't you got the power to free him?"

I could if it wasn't for one thing. The building in which he is now lying is the Death Lodge. Any person who is placed there is condemned to death already, and it is a part of the Blackfeet religion that he shall not escape. They would not loose him, even for me."

"Has any thing been tried on the prisoners?" "Enough to know that neither he nor I can do any thing. He was the bearer of a message from Mr. Mackintosh to Woo-wol-na, our chief, and when I took the chief to the lodge, Hugh delivered it with all the impressiveness at his command, and then I added my counsel to let him go free, lest we would be visited with the vengeance of the Hudson Bay men; but all produced no effect upon Woo-wol-na; I had lured my husband on, and he had been captured and brought in. Coming as a prisoner, it is decided that he must die as a prisoner. Oh! how I have prayed, night and day, since then, but the most that I can do is to get the chief to postpone his death a few days."

"Does he know you're his wife?"

"No; I have not told him that."

"Why not?"

"It would only work ill; he would be put to death the moment they discovered that Hugh knows it, and he has been careful to keep the secret to himself."

"What's your idea?" continued Nick; "do you think I kin talk Woo-wol-na into the idee of letting him go?"

"No one can do that; nothing less than a hundred armed men could do that."

"What do you think I kin do, then?"

"With the help of Heaven, you must manage to release him by means of strategy. You have a wonderful cunning in such things; you have befriended many men in distress, and I have been told that more than once you have rescued prisoners, almost at the moment of death."

"I don't deny I've had a good streak of luck, in years past, in that sort of business; but this 'ere thing has a harder look than any thing of the kind that I ever took hold of."

"Don't say, oh, my friend, that there is no hope!"

"I hain't said that; my principle is not to give up a chap, even after his hair has been raised, and the critters are yelling after him. I don't give up hope till a man has gone clean under, sure."

"Oh, what a relief your words are!" said Myra, rising to her feet and standing in front of him. "Will you do what you can, Nick, to befriend me?"

"I will!" was the firm and ready reply.

CHAPTER XV. WILL HE SUCCEED?

NICK WHIFFLES now made Myra Bandman sit down upon the log again, while he questioned her freely and closely.

How was the prisoner guarded? Was there any one time more favorable than another to attempt a piece of strategy? Could the appliance of sudden, unexpected force accomplish it? Was Woo-wol-na to be frightened by any threats? Once outside the Death Lodge, how far must the prisoner go before reaching the shelter of the woods? Was there any reason to believe that the Blackfeet suspected that the Phantom Princess had any intention of befriending the man by action, as she had already done by word? Did any of them know that she had gone to see him? Were her movements watched? Had any of the red-skins manifested any different disposition toward her, on account of the favorable words she had uttered? Did Miona, her daughter, know any thing of the identity of the captive? How long a respite was conceded to him?

Such, in substance, were the questions proposed by the trapper, and to them he received, in brief, the following answers:

There were always three fully-armed warriors, at least, guarding the approach to the Death Lodge, and it was by the permission of these sentinels that she herself had secured admission to him, none of them knowing the meaning of her interview with him. Beyond question, the most favorable time to befriend him was at night, as the cover of darkness was an advantage not to be compensated by any thing else. A sudden dash into the lodge by several men might succeed in getting the prisoner away before the alarm could become general; but several men were needed to accomplish this, and there was no time or means for procuring these.

Woo-wol-na was not to be intimidated by any threats, and all time spent in such attempts would be worse than thrown away. If by any possibility the outside of the Death Lodge could be reached by Bandman, he had only a short distance to run across the clearing to reach the forest, when, if the night was pretty dark, there was a chance of his getting

away. It was hardly possible that any of the Blackfeet suspected the relation between Myra and her husband or that she had any real purpose of befriending him. She was so accustomed to coming and going at will that no one would suspect her errand in going up Elk river, and she was satisfied that no one was watching her movements.

But the earnest efforts of Myra to befriend the hapless captive, she had every reason to believe, had won her the dislike of a number of the villagers. Woo-wol-na himself had given unmistakable evidence of his displeasure. Miona knew nothing at all about the matter. Should Bandman remain in the power of the Blackfeet, he could not possibly escape death more than three days longer at the furthest.

"Another thing," continued Nick, when these questions had all been proposed and answered: "have they got Hugh tied up?"

"I am sorry to say they have; he was left free until after I saw him, and then he was bound hand and foot."

"That's good; I'm glad to hear that," replied the trapper, emphatically; and noticing the look of surprise upon the face of the lady, he added, "I say it's good, because, if they've got him tied up, they ain't apt to watch him so close, and then we've got all the more chance to untie 'im."

"I do not see how that can be done," said Myra, "for no one can remain in the lodge long enough to unfasten his bonds, without attracting the notice of the sentinels."

Nick Whiffles smiled in his most benignant manner and pointed to Calamity, who was seated on his haunches in front of them.

"There's the animal that's done the thing a dozen times in his lifetime. Ef it hadn't been for him, I'd gone under long ago, when I was tied hand and foot by the Sioux, and when he slipped in between a half-dozen of the varmints, at night by the camp-fire, and chewed 'em loose."

The face of the Phantom Princess lit up with hope.

"Can it be possible? I never dreamed of such a thing. There are so many dogs in the village that yours could pass to and fro without alarming the Blackfeet. Then, when the cords were all unfastened, Hugh could make a dash out of the door, and, favored by God, he might escape."

"Hold on," said Nick, in whose head the scheme was beginning to take shape; "we must try and get the varmints away from the lodge, if only for a dozen seconds; if we can't do that, I don't see the first chance of Hugh giving 'em the slip."

The face of Myra saddened again, for the words of the trapper sorely disheartened her.

"You don't see how it can be done, but I think I do."

"Then everything is arranged," said she, brightening up again.

"No; it ain't," was the response; "after it's all understood between us, then Hugh has got to get the hang of things; he's got to know what to do, and when to do it to the second, or it's all up with us. Can you see him again?"

"It is doubtful."

"If there's any other way of doing it, it will be better. Do you know how to write?"

suddenly asked Nick, turning his head toward his companion with such an earnest expression that she smiled, as she answered:

"Certainly."

"I'll get you a piece of bark, and then you must scratch on it, with a sharp stone, that the pup has come to chew off his cord, and that the minute the animal comes out he's to follow him, and rush straight for the woods—can you do that?"

"Of course."

"Wal, then, I don't know but what we might as well be off, as we need all our time."

Nick rose to his feet, and with his rifle slung over his shoulder, started in the direction of the river, the lady and Calamity following him. He was so occupied with what she had told him, that he forgot to close the door of his cabin, and never once thought of the baby-clothes that he had left out, exposed to the view of any one who might chance to drop in during his absence.

As they walked along they kept up their converse about the all-important matter. Nick showed no impertinent curiosity about the history of Myra and her husband; his whole mind was centered upon the task he had undertaken—that of freeing Hugh Bandman from his hapless captivity.

A general plan had already taken shape in his head, but as he meditated upon it, he saw more and more clearly the difficulties, that were so great as to be almost insurmountable. The Blackfeet were always vigilant, and the fact of Bandman being an inmate of the Death Lodge shut out all hope of further reprieve or liberation.

Nick believed it possible that he might reach the wood, but the greatest danger was then, when the alarm should occur. The pursuit would be so quick and fierce, that in the moonlight discovery and recapture seemed inevitable.

This was the difficult point to be gotten over, and it was the one which gave him such concern, as he made his way through the wood, talking in an absent sort of way, with the hopeful, doubting, fearing woman, whose impatience constantly carried her ahead of both him and his fast-walking dog.

When the river was reached the canoe was gone. The Princess looked around somewhat impatiently, and then called the name of her daughter. The latter heard her, as I have shown, and instantly replied, while she and Ned Hazel made haste to return.

Soon the canoe was discerned rapidly crossing the stream, with the two in it, anxious not to keep them in waiting.

"Ned," said Nick, as the lad stepped ashore, "I shall be gone several days, and I want you to wait home for me."

"All right," was the cheery response.

The boat put off again, with the three in it, and Ned stood on the shore waving them a good-by, so long as they were in view; and then, when they disappeared from sight, he turned about and made his way toward his cabin-home.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 295.)

How He Made His "Pile."

BY FRANK H. CONVERSE.

SAID Charlie Davenport, "I made my 'pile' in a singular way," as after meeting for the first time in seven years, we talked over the events in our lives during that time.

And on being pressed by the present narrator, who had met with no such good luck in his wanderings, Charlie lit a fresh cigar, settled himself in his chair, and began:

"I shipped in the brig 'Sunrise,' on a whaling voyage, out of Provincetown, two years

ago, with another 'unfortunate,' by the name of Sid Way.

"Well, if you've ever been on a whaling cruise, you'll know what a bad scrape we had got into; if you haven't, take my word for it, and as 'Punch' said, by way of advice to those about to marry—'don't.'"

"Of course we made up our minds to run away; green hands always do, on board a whaler, but when we touched anywhere for fresh provisions, the officers kept their weather eye open, and it was no go."

"Captain and crew were both tarred with the same brush; he was a bully and a coward, carried brass knuckles, and used them on the men at the slightest provocation; when he was drunk, he was bad, and when he was getting over it, he was worse, and yet, he was very fortunate in filling his oil casks."

"We were cruising in the Caribbean Sea, for some time, and then sailed for the Charleston Grounds, which lies on the Eastern edge of the Gulf stream, in the latitude of Charleston, S. C., and it is here that sperm whales are often fallen in with."

"Sid and I had about made up our minds that we were 'in' for an eighteen months' cruise, when one evening, just before the look-out had come down from aloft, we spoke the 'Eleanor B. Conwell,' a whaler, belonging to the same owners as the 'Sunrise,' and our captain was invited to come on board; the 'Eleanor' running to windward, and heaving to, as the wind was very light, with but little sea going, although a bank of cloud in the Eastward, gave promise of the blow before morning."

"Shall I send all the men in the boat, with you, Captain C.?" asked the mate, as the old man went below, after giving orders to lower the starboard boat.

"No," was the ungracious answer, "I sha'n't stay more than half an hour—looks like dirty weather 'fore morning—send those two 'Down East' chaps."

"In a few moments he reappeared on deck with some letters for the officers of the 'Eleanor,' (which vessel had been out over thirteen months) and called Mr. Marshall, the second mate, to accompany him, remarking at the same time:

"Those two Down East fellows are the only chaps that can pull an oar, on board the 'Sunrise,' and I don't want the crew of the 'Eleanor' laughing at my boat's crew, who can't keep stroke, if they were to die for it."

"Without daring to look at each other, Sid and I took our places in the boat, after it was lowered, and Captain C., with Mr. Marshall, jumping in, the falls were unhooked, and we rowed smoothly over the long swelling waves, till we reached the side of the 'Eleanor.'"

"How are you, Captain C.?" sung out the master of the vessel, from the top of the after house; "come aboard, men and all, and drop your boat astern."

"But Captain C., probably thinking that he could 'spite' us by leaving us in the boat, sternly commanded us to stay in her."

"And if you let her knock against the side, while I'm aboard, I'll knock your two heads together," was his parting remark—the last one that we ever heard him make, for I haven't seen him from that day to this, added Charlie, in parenthesis.

"It grew darker, and darker, and as the cook gave the summons to supper, the heads that had been leaning over the rail, occasionally interchanging remarks with us in the boat, were withdrawn, and as I gazed cautiously

around, Sid whispered:

"Now's our time!"

"Softly shoving away from the vessel's side, we silently dipped our oars, and pulled away for dear life, but had not taken a dozen strokes before we heard the voice of Captain C., singing out like mad.

"Here, you young scoundrels, pull back here, or it'll be the worse for you!"

"Couldn't think of it, Cap'n," I answered from out of the darkness. "I'm afraid you'd knock our heads together. We're going to take your boat for a little cruise. Good night!"

"And blast you for a mean, low-lived, salt-fish eating, blow-hard of a Cope Codder!" roared Sid, as a parting message—the longest speech that I ever knew him to make, and as we went to our oars with renewed energy, a flash and report from the deck of the Eleanor, followed by the explosion of a bomb lance within a few feet of the boat, proved that Capt. C. was getting mad.

"Better head her to the northward; they could see us by the flash, and if they lower the boats to follow us they won't be so likely to overhaul us," was my suggestion, to which Sid acquiesced, and, stepping the mast, we set the sail, a light but steady wind drawing almost directly from astern, and were soon bounding over the long waves at a rate that effectually put an end to all danger of pursuit, the more especially as the night, which had been pleasant, though quite dark, began to show indications of a decided change.

"Going to blow," said Sid, briefly, as the wind came in fitful puffs from a bank of dark-colored clouds in the southeast, and the sea began to be 'choppy.'"

"To say that I was perfectly at ease would be to make myself out a bolder man than I am, but I knew that if we could keep our boat before the wind, or even head to the sea in case of a heavy blow, that she could be kept aloft in anything short of a hurricane, and we were so rejoiced at our escape that our present condition did not seem half as bad as it would under other circumstances."

"Sid fell asleep in the bottom of the boat as coolly as though he had been in his bunk on board the 'Sunrise.'"

"I roused him up when I reckoned it was near midnight, and took my own turn at napping, but toward daybreak the gale had reached such a high stage that we were obliged to take down our sail, and keep the boat before the wind, which was all we could do."

"Suddenly, as it grew lighter, I saw what I took to be a rock in mid-ocean, and, to my wonderment, all around it, for several rods as it seemed, it was as smooth as a mill pond, while outside of this charmed circle the sea was running to a terrific height."

"What in thunder—began Sid, as I called his attention to this remarkable phenomenon, that lay almost directly ahead of us; and as he spoke it flashed across my mind that I had heard Rider, the ship-keeper, speak of having laid alongside of a dead sperm whale that they had killed, through a terrible gale, where their boat was hardly disturbed by the action of the waves, owing to the 'aleek' or smoothness of the sea, produced by the oozing out of the oil from the frequently punctured blubber."

"I hastily explained to him my suspicions that our supposed rock was probably a dead whale, and, as our boat was borne by a huge cresting roller into the smooth expanse of water which I have mentioned, the decidedly powerful smell that greeted our olfactory organs proved that I was right."

"Any port in a storm—eh, Sid?" I said, as, after we had tied the only substitutes we had

for pocket handkerchiefs over our faces, we hauled the boat alongside the huge mass, and made fast by means of the harpoons which were lashed in the boat, which, buried in the blubber of the whale, served as standards, to which we made fast a line at the stern and one at the bow, where, to our great delight, we lay as comfortably as we would by the side of a pier in the river."

"Well, if this don't beat all my going fishing!" was Sid's brief remark, as we sat comfortably in our boat, rising and falling with the sea, it is true, but without the slightest discomfort to ourselves, while all around the ocean was a mass of foaming breakers, the sky was of inky blackness, and the wind—well, I never heard it howl so—but once before, and that was in the great hurricane of '87, when I was cast away on the Island of St. Thomas, in the brig 'Wings of the Morning.'"

"The blow began to moderate about four o'clock in the afternoon, as near as we could judge, and we were talking over our chances of being picked up by a passing vessel, and the probability of our claiming the whale as our own rightful property, when Sid, who had been using his eyes more than his tongue, said:

"I've been looking this fellow over pretty carefully, Charlie, and it's curious, but there ain't a harpoon-thrust in him, nor bomb-lance wound, or anything of the sort, and it would take considerable many of such, before an eighty-barrel sperm would turn flukes and spout blood."

"Well?" I said, inquiringly.

"Ever hear tell of ambergris?" asked Sid; "stuff that's worth more than its weight in gold, that's found in the inside of sperm whales, and the accumulation of which produces stoppage, and kills the whale?"

"I looked at Sid, and he at me."

"No harm to try," he observed, sentimentally; "here's all the boat's cutting-gear, spades, knives, and hatchet, lashed with the lances and irons; easy enough to try, while the gale is going down."

"But, the confounded smell!" I answered, half laughing.

"If we find ambergris, you won't smell rotten whale, much," was Sid's answer, and half convinced, I unlashed the sharp spades, and climbing with some difficulty upon the slippery skin of the whale, we commenced our doubtful task, which, for my own part, I considered a mere whim."

"Phew! but it was tough work, and every now and then, as one of us would get the full flavor, we would be for the moment faint and sick, yet with a sort of desperation we delved away, when, as Dick's sharp spade pushed down by a rib, an odor arose that completely overpowered the previous smell of putrefying flesh."

"By heavens, we've struck it!" exclaimed Sid, moved out of his usual taciturnity, and with a face as pale as a sheet; he piled his spade, and with my help, a hole was made about a foot square, out of which we took a lump of pure ambergris of a pale, half-transparent, greenish color, whose odor could not be inhaled without making one faint and sick with its very sweetness."

"How much it weighed, I do not now exactly remember, but when, after drifting about two days longer, we were picked up by the cotton-loaded schooner, 'Laura Preston,' bound to Philadelphia, and landed in that port, we sold the ambergris outright to a Polish Jew, for the nice little sum of twenty-two thousand eight hundred and fifty-three dollars, I began to think that Sid Way knew what he was about, when he proposed to investigate the interior of a half-putrid whale."

"There," said Charlie, drawing a long breath, "that is one reason that I don't go to sea any more, and here," he continued, turning to a pretty, blushing little woman, who announced that tea was ready, "is another, and the strongest reason." And marveling much at Charlie's "strange story," I followed my host and hostess out to the dining-room, wishing that a "streak of luck" might some day come in my way, yet very much doubting that such ever would be the case."

Instances as above, of the discovery of this singular formation, are by no means rare; and it is not many years since the "Sea Fox," a whaler belonging, I think, in Nantucket, brought into port a lump of ambergris, said to be worth \$40,000. It is used as a basis for costly perfumes, and commands a ready sale, notwithstanding its almost fabulous price."

F. W. C.]

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Another log put on the fire, and fetch your cheer up here, For since you promised to obey to-night it's twenty years: It's twenty years ago, my wife, since the parson made us one, And we've had more quarrels and things like that than any under the sun.

You're a bigger woman than I am, wife, and you rather held your own Whenever you got your dandruff up and brought the broomstick down. I've evacuated these premises sometimes in hasty haste And we've had more quarrels and things like that than any under the sun.

We've lived together for twenty years and fought most all the way. And I've had to be very particular of everything I'd say. And if ever I'd make a mistake in grammar and call you a fool, You never failed to exhibit your grit, good wife, as a general rule.

Your affectionate arm has encircled my neck full many times and oft, But the way your hands caressed my hair was anything but soft; And you have bitten my ears in such a tender and loving way That they have almost been chawed off, I'm very sorry to say.

I always strived to be good to you, and it didn't take you long To make me thoroughly comprehend when I was doing wrong. The skillet would bring a presentiment that all things wasn't right, And I'd never stop for my hat to get out of your reach and sight.

Good wife, you needn't be afraid; draw a little closer your cheer, You know I never would hurt you; put down that shovel, my dear! I'm willing to-night to admit that I was half in the wrong In every fuss we have had as through life we went along.

I'll acknowledge half of the fault to-night—now, wife, please don't be rash. Quit! stop! cease! for mercy sake, there goes the table to smash! That shovel! Oh, Lord! I beg your pard—my head! there goes the light! It was every bit my fault; ouch, where is the door! good-night!

What a "Bohemian" Saw

BY JENNIE DAVIS BURTON.

SOMETHING very strange happened to Aleck Drew, something very distressing to Olivia Wilder.

Mr. Drew was walking very briskly over a lonely country road, all his earthly equipments in the little bundle which hung from his stick over one shoulder, the very essence of light-heartedness somehow conveyed in the merry tune he was whistling, the clear notes of which penetrated far into the surrounding solitudes. All persons would not have been merry under his present circumstances, but Aleck was a philosopher as well as a genius.

He had been recently engaged as reporter upon a leading local newspaper, but a tendency to substitute imaginary sensations for actual incidents had led to a sharp reprimand from the proprietor, whereupon Mr. Drew threw up the position in disgust, and, having already overdrawn his salary, left his trunk in liquidation of a fortnight's board, and trudged out of the country town without a dollar in his pocket. His destination was another large town still some miles ahead of him, where he fancied he might turn his Bohemian talents to some account, for, in addition to his late attempt in a repertorial capacity, he had been at various intervals of his five-and-twenty years of life artist, actor, musician, lecturer, and if he had achieved no very brilliant success, he was what is called "clever" in each and every line.

It was within half an hour of sunset, and the sky was full of ominous, copper-colored clouds, the heavy air was portentous of brooding storm, but, notwithstanding this and the distance he had yet to traverse, Mr. Drew halted suddenly in his line of march. It was only a wild, picturesque scene which attracted his artist eye, and in a moment he had out pencils and Bristol board, and was sketching in bold outline a study for future more careful delineation. There was a turbulent little river, fringed by a forest of ragged pines, through a break in which a flood of that ruddy light streamed down and ensanguined it, while bluff upon bluff rose away in the background. The artist himself was ensconced in a sheltered nook, and never observed how those lurid clouds were driving and darkening through the sky until the boisterous wind currents swept downward and caught the tops of the forest trees and lashed them desperately. All in a moment, as it were, the river seemed to be running up-stream in short, chopping waves, the intermittent gusts came harder with each succeeding one, and a sound of carriage wheels grinding the gravel rose suddenly on one of the calmer intervals. In the next an excited voice was borne upon the wind:

"Make those horses fly if you can, Brinley. Why, only think of it, man! Three years absent from my wife, and left her on our wedding-day. No wonder I can scarcely wait to get home again."

"It was a strange thing that she ceased hearing from you so suddenly." Looking out from his perch, Aleck could distinctly see the open carriage, with its two occupants, being slowly driven up the incline which the road followed; one a young, wiry fellow, bronzed and bearded, the other a thick-set, middle-aged man, who held the reins in one hand and had the other thrust beneath his coat.

"I tell you there is some villainy at work. And by the living Lord! if I ever unearth the scoundrel who is at the bottom of it he shall be made to suffer."

"You think you will unearth him?" "Every moment I can spare from settling up her father's business shall be devoted to that end. We will have a balance-sheet drawn and close up the accounts of the firm, as you will undoubtedly wish to withdraw."

"What has given you that impression, Mr. Wilder?"

"I think, in consideration of all this underhand work, you will find it expedient to do so, sir."

"Meaning, you suspect me?"

"Meaning that, exactly."

"Humph! Glad it's none of my quarrel," muttered Drew, noting the fierce looks of the two men as they faced each other. Next instant he sprang to his feet, and then dropped back weak and trembling, sick from the sight which met his eyes. Like a flash Brinley had brought his hand from beneath his coat and fired two shots; simultaneously with the movement the other threw up his arm and fell backward, half in the vehicle, half out of it, his bronzed face turned suddenly ghastly, and with a great red stain upon his forehead, and blood trickling from his hair. For a moment the unseen observer sat there, powerless to

move; in that moment the murderer jumped to the ground, and, dragging the body free of the carriage, tumbled it without ceremony down the steep bank into the river. Then he was back in the seat again, whipping his horses to a terrific speed, which carried them and him over the hill and out of sight as the clouds opened and the first burst of heavy rain came down. It acted upon Drew like a powerful restorative. Without stopping to think he stripped off his boots and coat, and, taking a short run, plunged head first down the steep, and was battling with the strong current of the foaming little river as the last lurid glare from the west was suddenly obscured, and darkness fell like a pall over all the scene.

One week later Olivia Wilder was walking her parlor up and down, her sable dress trailing over the deep, rich tints of the carpet, a flush on her cheeks and a light in her eyes, such as had not been seen there for months before. That radiant look struck a visitor who was entering unannounced with unaffected surprise, and held him transfixed, with a gleam leaping into his own pale eyes, glowing and exultant. She saw him as she turned and took a few steps that way.

"Come in, Mr. Brinley. I was expecting you. Be seated, please." With a wave of her hand she indicated a chair, and herself sunk into one opposite. You have brought the books, I see."

"You will go over the accounts?" he asked. "I trust I see you better than when I was here last, Mrs. Wilder."

"You see me in a healthier frame of mind, and I will let you explain the business to me. I find it hard to understand how my father's affairs could have become so embarrassed as you say."

"Through unwise speculations at home and unaccountable transactions of the branch house in San Francisco; mainly due to the latter," explained Mr. Brinley, smoothly. "You will see by the entries what a draft upon our resources that enterprise proved. Pardon me; the subject, I know, is a painful one, but it is necessary it should be discussed. Don't blame me, please; I cannot alter facts."

Mrs. Wilder picked up a screen from the table to shade her face, and he could see that her hand trembled.

"It is all true," she asked, in a low voice. "Tell me once more—all—the worst."

"Is it necessary to distress you by repeating it? Well, then, from the result of my private inquiries, it appears that the branch house was badly mismanaged from the first. So badly that I can account for it only by the supposition of deliberate fraud. Its close was disastrous. The credit of the house here was saved by the use of my private fortune, as I have already told you. For the rest, I have taken all possible precautions to hush every breath of scandal which may have got abroad. The loss of the 'Sea Foam' on her way to India is connected in but few minds with the recent mysterious disappearance of Mark Wilder. But for the chance recognition of him by an acquaintance among the outward bound passengers, and the fact since elicited that he sailed under an assumed name, even we might still be uncertain of his fate. As it is, all doubt is set at rest."

"In your mind," said the lady in a still, suppressed way. "But, you were always cruelly prejudiced against my husband."

"Your husband was a defaulter; he betrayed his trust shamefully; worse than all he deserted you; but he is beyond the reach of earthly vengeance at the bottom of the Pacific. I thank heaven for it." Again the white hand holding the screen trembled visibly.

"It was due to you that he was transferred to that position," she said, presently. "Due to you that we were separated upon our marriage day."

"It was. When a clerk from the house married the senior's daughter, it was no more than right that he should be admitted as a partner. That opening seemed felicitous. Do me the justice to remember that your father's ill-health and his unwillingness to spare you caused the separation. I have always wondered at his sudden resolve which ended in having the ceremony performed; it would have spared you something had you remained only engaged."

"What?" The hand-screen went down, and she looked across at him with an unfathomable expression in her deep, dark eyes.

"The disgrace of bearing that name, for one thing."

"Is it so very great then? Must the stain of another's sin reflect upon me?"

"Not in my eyes," he cried, eagerly. "To me you must always be purer than the angels; but it is an uncharitable world. You, blameless, would have to suffer if it knew all. It never shall know from me, but, if the time ever comes—there is one way to fling off the first taint of reproach—with the name."

He spoke hesitatingly, choosing his words carefully, impassioned, yet fearing to say too much. Mrs. Wilder had no desire to tempt further expression from him who had been once a rejected suitor of her own.

"The books now, if you please," she said, shortly.

He bowed and turned to bend over them. "How she has changed in this brief time," he thought, exultingly. "A woman's love will never survive disgrace in its object; that stroke has told. It was horrible work, but I shall have my reward. A man might well dare perdition for her." He said:

"I have prepared a summary, which will answer our present purpose. I will leave the books for you to examine at leisure."

The summary was a startling array of figures, by which it was made evident to even an undisciplined feminine mind that Mr. Brinley had lost some twenty thousand dollars through the misfortunes of the senior and the criminality of the junior partners in the firm. Now that they were both gone, and she left beggared, how would that amount of money ever be repaid?

She turned away from inspecting the paper abruptly, and opened a leaf of the folding-doors which divided the double parlors.

"Mark, dear!" she called. At that name, at the changed, tender voice in which it was spoken, Mr. Brinley looked wonderingly up.

"Come here and tell me how this account tallies with yours. And tell him that wherever the merited disgrace may fall, I am, and always will be, proud of bearing your name. It is just possible the reason papa hurried our marriage was that he foresaw dimly a time when I might need a husband's protection against the diabolical scheming of such a wretch as that."

With, paling face, and dilating eyes the schemer sprang to his feet. "Mark, dear" had appeared and stood now by her side. She clasped her hands over his arm, and turned a scornful glance upon the baffled, frightened, doubtful villain.

"Well, sir," spoke the new-comer, sharply, "have you any thing to say for yourself?"

The other started forward excitedly. "Who are you? Not Mark Wilder; I'll take my oath on that. This is some impostor, Mrs. Wilder, not your husband. Why, look at the man; you surely can not be deceived by him."

"Yes, look at me, Olivia, and answer him." "He is my husband whom you have falsely maligned, wickedly traduced."

"If you still doubt it, here are proofs. Here is the balance-sheet of my branch which was closed without any disastrous effect to the firm. Here is your last letter to me, inquiring the exact date of my return. Here also are the papers left in Olivia's charge by her father to be delivered to me. And here," springing forward and seizing the summary, "is a proof of the contemptible weakness of your plot. This would never deceive any one but a woman, but it has not deceived my wife. My own papers have had a wetting, but you will find them authentic."

Still Brinley stared, aghast but incredulous.

"In Heaven's name, who are you?" he gasped.

"I am Mark Wilder, I tell you," quite imperturbably. "If you have your own doubts still, perhaps you had better drag the river just below the bluffs, and see if you find me there. Men have escaped as imminent dangers as drowning with a bullet-grazed head before now, I dare say. There is the door, Mr. Brinley; I will see you elsewhere tomorrow."

"And I will see you, sir! Whoever you may be, you are no more Mark Wilder than I am."

In his own mind he was convinced of it, but how could he brand him as an impostor without bringing about the exposure of his own guilt, while Olivia acknowledged him? How the thought galled him, after separating her from her true husband, after weaving a mesh which he thought secure about her, to be balked now by a sharper scoundrel than himself!

He was at the business house betimes next morning, but his antagonist was there before him. No one but Holmes, the cashier, witnessed the interview.

"This an impostor?" cried Holmes, in amazement, as the resident partner broke out in violent accusation. "Why, bless you, sir; this is young Mark Wilder, no other. I ought to know. I was here when Mark came in as errand-boy, and I saw him work his own way up; ay, and I saw him married to Miss Olivia with my own eyes."

"Is all the world mad, or is it that I am?" Brinley asked himself, despairingly. "Shall I throw up the game and make off with the funds? No; I'll not be beaten so."

Too late for that had he desired it, for Holmes' eye was upon him now.

A week, two weeks passed, and Brinley's sullen brow began to clear, his despondent manner to brighten. One day he presented himself at the Wilder residence with a tightly buttoned-up person in citizen's dress by his side, and the two were admitted together.

"Tell Mrs. Wilder what you know of this person, Hart," said Mr. Brinley, triumphantly.

"Well, ma'am, I've seen him tricked out in another sort of rig playing Othello, in this very town. I've made sure of it since I've been watching him for these three days back. Name of Drew, and it's a clear case of gammon the gent's been playing now."

"A clear case of something worse. Detective Hart, do your duty. Arrest this man for the murder of Mark Wilder. The evidence is that he is in possession of Wilder's effects, and the mysterious disappearance of the latter warrants the presumption of a murder."

"Don't trouble yourself, please," said a voice at his back. "I relieve you from carrying the burden of my identity further, Drew. Your make-up is very good, but not quite so convincing as the ghost of myself, I fancy."

Brinley wheeled. He saw a very pale, rather thin gentleman, with an ugly scar just grazing his temple and plowing its way through his short, curly hair.

Needless to say that the arrest for murder was not made. The little comedy was played to the end, but it had not been without an object; namely, to hold the managing partner in check until Wilder was sufficiently recovered from his wound—a serious one—to take the business in hand for himself. Holmes, of course, was a party to the affair. Mr. Brinley made a mysterious disappearance on his own account immediately after it, and when Drew painted his successful "River Scene" and was bought at his own price, and afterward graced the drawing-room of his good friends, the Wilders.

"Upon the other side the same trail was found, and in pursuing this they soon came upon positive proof that they were on the right track."

"At the top of a steep bank, having just crossed a creek, they found a small piece of saddle-girth, which one of the young men recognized as his own."

"The strap had broken while the horse was straining up the steep bank, and the piece had been cut away to permit of mending the remainder."

"This was enough, and with whip and spur the young regulators pressed on after the thieves."

"Night was falling when from a ridge, where they halted a moment to rest their horses, one of the party discovered and pointed out a solitary cabin perched upon the side of a hill away off to their right."

"The building was so far off the road that Markham doubted if the fugitives would stop there, but, wishing to be certain, he with one companion turned off to examine it, while the other two pushed on the more direct road. If they were not overtaken in two hours they were to return."

"Half an hour's ride brought young Markham within a few hundred yards of the cabin, and here dismounting and securing their horses, the two advanced, cautiously, until they stood under the shadow of its overhanging roof. There was no light whatever about the building, but the sound of voices within informed the watchers that the place was inhabited."

"While deliberating what course to pursue, the sharp click of steel upon flint struck their ears, and a moment after, a bright light flashed up and penetrated without through many cracks in the badly-chinked walls."

"Quick as thought, Markham applied his eye to one of these, sprung back with a muttered oath, and quickly cocked his rifle."

"They are there," he whispered, hoarsely. "Look! and he gave place to his companion."

"As the young man had said, the party they were seeking were there."

"Johnson was seated upon a rickety chair, with Miss Markham resting upon his knee, while the other man was stooping before the fireplace, kindling the faggots placed therein."

A hand's turn at anything. All she would do was to fix herself as fine as possible, and with idle hands set at the window all day and growl at the hard luck that had overtaken them."

"The Markhams had been in their new place for nearly two years, when some other families came out and located around, and before long there was a store put up at the cross-roads, and soon after that others came, until quite a settlement had sprung up in Bear Grass Creek."

"Among the last lot that came was a young man, and a handsome fellow he was, too, who claimed to hail from some of the big cities down East, I forget which, and as he appeared to have plenty of money, dressed in a way never seen before out there, and was powerful attentive to all the gals in the neighborhood, he soon came to be a great favorite among them."

"But he didn't take well with the older people. His ways wasn't like theirs, besides which he was too fond of laying around the store, idling away the time and drinking the whisky that Davis, the storekeeper, got from passing flatboats."

"From the very first day when Frank Johnson, as he said his name was, came into the settlement, he took a great shine at Lucy Markham, and as that young female took no pains to hide how much she was pleased at it, they very soon came to be always together, and by and by it got whispered that they were engaged to be married."

"About this time a great excitement arose over the loss of three or four fine horses, which a Colonel Thorn had fetched over the mountains. The animals were taken out of his stable one night, and though some of the best trailers on the border set off in pursuit, they never succeeded in running them to earth, and so they were lost."

"Three weeks after this, and just when the excitement was about dying out, two more horses were missed, and never could be found. All this time there was no one suspected, that is, no one about the settlement."

"It was either white men from further back in the interior, or else it was the red-skins from 'other side of the river."

"Another spell of quiet ensued, no horses being missed for nearly six months, and people began to think that they had seen the end of it."

"During this time Frank Johnson was courting Lucy Markham day and night, and though the old folks were terribly opposed to it, it only served to make matters worse."

"The brother, too, set his face against the match, and once when much angered, swore that he would slay the girl before she should marry a horse-thief. This was the first intimation that any one suspected Johnson, but the opinion having been once started, you know what the result would be."

"Before night it was rumored all over the settlement that Johnson was undoubtedly the thief who had been deprecating so extensively of late."

"It was a terribly dangerous accusation to make in their days, and when, that very night, young Markham was called on by a party of settlers to state his reasons for making the charge, he was compelled to own up that he had no grounds save his own suspicions, and so had to back down on his own words."

"Johnson of course heard of it, but, strange to say, at least it was thought strange then, he took no notice of the insult."

"He was forbidden the house of the Markhams under a threat of being shot if caught on the premises, and, to all appearances, the intimacy between Lucy and himself ceased."

"But, such was not the case, by any means. Johnson was a sharp, as well as an unscrupulous villain, and he played his cards so well that even the vigilant brother was completely deceived."

"But the end came, or rather the exposure, for the end came some time after, when, one morning, the alarm was given that three of the finest horses in the settlement were missing, and with them the gay Mr. Frank Johnson."

"But it shortly appeared that he was not the only one who failed to appear when called that day."

"Another young man, an intimate companion of Johnson was absent, as was also Lucy Markham. You can well believe that there was considerable excitement in Bear Grass settlement that day."

"Two companies of young men, four in one and half a dozen in the other, were instantly assembled, one to search back into the interior, and the other to cross the river at the falls and scour the Indiana side."

"Young Markham and his three companions crossed the river, following a half-obliterated trail, it having rained very hard the night before, which they believed to be that left by the fugitives."

"Upon the other side the same trail was found, and in pursuing this they soon came upon positive proof that they were on the right track."

"At the top of a steep bank, having just crossed a creek, they found a small piece of saddle-girth, which one of the young men recognized as his own."

"The strap had broken while the horse was straining up the steep bank, and the piece had been cut away to permit of mending the remainder."

"This was enough, and with whip and spur the young regulators pressed on after the thieves."

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"Johnson was in high glee, and was laughing over the complete success, as he thought, that had attended his venture, but Miss Markham, who knew her brother better than either of the others, was evidently very uneasy and watchful."

"For fully five minutes young Markham did not speak, but stood leaning upon his rifle as though in deep thought."

"Presently he leaned forward, and after whispering a word in his companion's ear, again approached the crevice in the wall."

"The position of the parties within had materially changed. Miss Markham had arisen and was standing upon the further side of the fireplace. Johnson was also on his feet, and he and his companion were standing side by side in front of the fire, earnestly talking."

"The quick eye of young Markham noted the positions."

"They were in direct range, and instantly the heavy rifle was silently protruded through the opening, a quick aim taken, and before I had fully realized what